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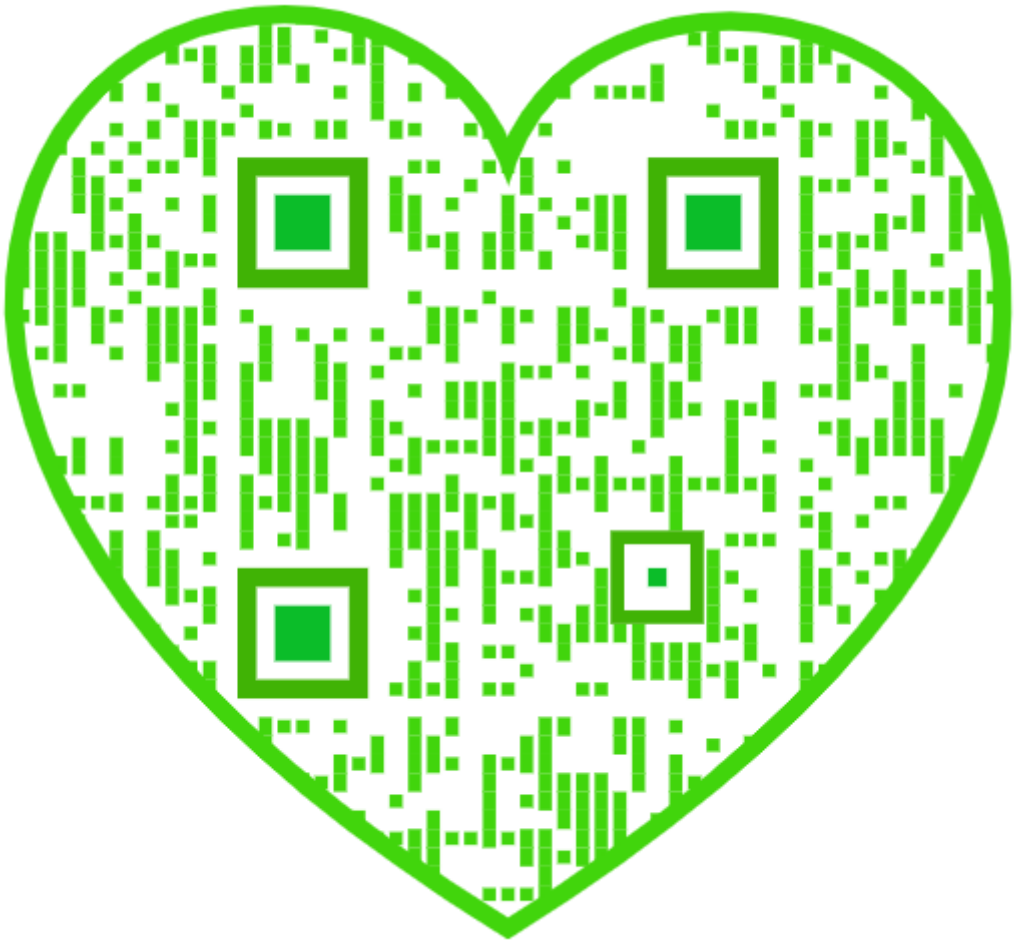

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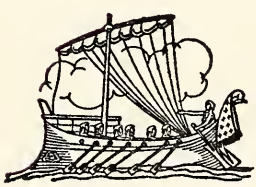
THE COLLEGE
SHORT STORY READER

Edited by

HARRY W. HASTINGS
New York State College
for Teachers



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FIRST EDITION

To

LOUISE CLEMENT HASTINGS

Preface

THE FIRST ESSENTIAL FOR A story or for a collection of stories is that the reader shall find it interesting. If he already has a taste for good literature, I believe he will enjoy the stories in this volume without much aid. Perhaps all such a student needs is a comfortable chair and a good light. You may hand him the book and let him alone. But if he is baffled by the modern idiom, he should rely on classroom discussions. Contemporary writers are often more reticent than earlier writers, even though they seem outspoken. They rely more on the reader's cooperation; they are elliptical, aiming to suggest, to release the reader's imagination, rather than tell him how he should feel and what he should dream. Their effects are, consequently, elusive. A student who is accustomed to the simpler idiom of the stories of earlier times or to the conventional patterns of popular narratives of the present may fail to appreciate the subtle art of today unless he has help.

The stories in this collection are intended for college students either in general courses or in special courses in the writing of fiction. Most of them were published during the last thirty years, about the span of one generation. Some of them, particularly the earlier ones, have been reprinted often and are among the classics of the period, stories that, as the saying is, everyone ought to know; some have not appeared before in an anthology of this kind. I have tried to gather together stories that are good reading and that are characteristic of the period, stories that are varied in subject and in the way they are told. Believing that too much history, too

much analysis of structure, too much secondary interest of any kind in an anthology of literature dulls the reader's pleasure, I have kept the editorial apparatus at a minimum. Here is clean copy. Whatever the teacher finds it profitable to do with such stories as these in classroom discussions, he may do unimpeded and unannoyed.

Finally, if these stories be taken as a mirror of our times, they do not show decadence. Let it be acknowledged that we have been living in an era that is intemperate and distraught. Let us agree that to preserve a true perspective we should read the writings of the past as well as those of the present. But let us not fail to notice how dominant in the stories of the present volume are resentment of injustice, probing scrutiny of the nature of evil, desire to be honest, admiration of courage and loyalty, compassion for the sorrowful and blighted, respect for the dignity and honor of mankind.

H. W. H.

Albany, New York
February, 1948

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On the Art of Fiction

WHEN WE GO TO THE THEATER, we are transported into a fictitious world. The situation is artificial, for we are looking through a huge picture-frame into a three-sided room. Yet we are persuaded of the reality of the acts and thoughts and feelings of the players. There is created for us a dramatic illusion in which for the time being, oblivious of our own existence, we live enthralled.

Obviously the pleasure of exchanging reality for illusion is not confined to the theater. Even in humble forms of art like the puppet show and the comic strip, we enjoy some illusion of reality; in the epic and the opera we feel it more strongly; and in the novel and the short story the illusion is often so powerful that we are completely absorbed. It gives us pleasure to visualize people in whom we can believe, who are doing things under the compulsion of motives we understand, and who live in places like those we know. And we expect the illusion to be maintained consistently. If the feet of a clumsy puppeteer show unintentionally beneath the curtain, we laugh at the sudden disillusionment. If the heroine's speech in a serious novel seems out of character, we are annoyed. The creation of a consistent *narrative illusion* is, in short, one of the primary features of the art of fiction.

By what means is the illusion created? Chiefly by a combination of characters, setting, and plot under the control of a unifying impression, or theme. Let us look at these narrative elements one after the other.

Characterization. George Henry Lewes once told George Eliot that she had talent in "dramatic ventriloquism." Al-

though most of us would believe him mistaken in attributing this ability to her, his phrase is a good one. The successful writer of fiction has the power to make imaginary persons seem alive, just as Edgar Bergen makes Charlie McCarthy seem alive. How the writer does this is clear enough. He makes us acquainted with his characters through all the means by which we learn to know people in real life: by what they say and do, or fail to say and do; by their manners and their personal appearance; by their motives; by what people say about them; by their relation to other people and to their surroundings. Just as in daily life we gradually form our impressions of people by watching and listening, sifting out the conflicting evidence, changing our opinions, warming and cooling, until finally our judgment is fairly clear, so in reading fiction we form our impressions of imaginary characters. It is as simple as that. Deceptively simple, for the writer must select with extraordinary care. He must omit a multitude of undistinguished details and use only the most revealing. Fiction does not tolerate the slow pace, the wastage of meaningless hours, the interludes of boredom that occur in life.

The writer of fiction can do one thing which we cannot do in life. He can assume omniscience and reveal the flow of thought, emotion, imagination and sensation in the consciousness of one character. The story thus becomes an interior monologue which screens life through a character's mind and gives it the special tone and color of a personality. This form of fiction is difficult to write without some sacrifice of the vividness of narrative illusion.

Setting. Just as in life no man lives in a vacuum, so in their fictitious worlds characters do not live in vacuums. The characters have *settings.* These settings are not merely their physical surroundings, the city streets or the country lanes, the mountains or the prairies, but also the social and spiritual textures of their lives, the grammar to which they are accus-

tomed, the usages of their social group, their prayers, and their moral codes.

By the skillful employment of settings the author adds a dimension to his work. He may use settings merely as decorative features in which readers will find something of the picturesqueness which in real life attracts them to scenes of natural beauty or to the foreignness of Chinatown. He may use settings, too, for the moods they produce. To arouse moods of mystery and horror, for instance, he will show us bloodstains, mysteriously opened doors, owls, bats, snakes, wind and rain, lightning, thunder, lizards, guttering candles, dim moonlight, instruments of torture, creaking beams, rattling chains, dungeons, crypts, secret panels. After we have seen and heard such sights and sounds for a while, we are in a mood to believe that anything may happen, particularly anything horrible and mysterious.

In addition to using his settings for decoration and for the emotional mood they arouse, the writer sometimes gives them the power which the scientist attributes to environment. He makes us sense that the characters are molded by their surroundings. James T. Farrell, for instance, fills his novels with tragic characters enveloped in sordid poverty and brawling; they dream pitiful dreams and harbor savage resentments. He makes us understand that environment gives distortion to their minds and has the power of a merciless fate over everything they do.

Plot. Living our own lives and observing the lives of others, we see the principle of unity often manifested, as in the twenty-four hours that compose a day, or the birth, growth, death that compose a personal history. We are equally familiar with the sequences into which the events of life fall—one after another in time, one after another in the chain of cause and effect—and with the many relationships among events which make them ironical or incongruous or harmonious. Elementary and familiar though these observations may

be, they have formed in our minds patterns of orderliness. These determine what we shall find agreeable in an author's management of the action of his story; that is, in his plot. *Plot* is the weaving of the action of stories into complications within which we are pleased to recognize such unity, such sequences, such relationships. It is the connection of events in a story.

In the "plotted" story a problem or a conflict is traced for the reader from its beginning, through a middle state in which its outcome is uncertain, to a definite resolution or end. Few would be incautious enough to say at exactly what point, by reduction of the importance of plot, a story becomes a sketch or an anecdote becomes a picture or a tone-study. Nor is the question of first importance. In contemporary stories the plot is often given slight emphasis. The modern reader does not insist that stories shall leave him with a feeling of completeness like that of reaching the Q.E.D. at the end of a problem in geometry. His satisfaction does not come from his knowing that a problem is solved, a fight is over, a cycle is complete. Though the story may not have been packed with dramatic action he may still take pleasure in feeling that it has given a glimpse of the delight or adventure or contrariness which reside in circumstance forever and aye. At its best the "non-plotted" story has a poetic quality. "Poetry," said Sainte-Beuve, "does not tell us everything, but sets us dreaming."

The Combination of the Three Elements. Characters, settings, and plots, each of which I have discussed briefly, are the most important elements of fiction. Characterization gives human interest; setting gives tone and atmosphere and a feeling of reality; plot gives suspense and excitement and a sense of order in the world. In some stories character is most important, in others setting, and in others plot. In some the three are emphasized equally.

Raw narrative material, as yet unformed into stories, is best

when all three unite in it, that is, when something that is done is interesting because of the doer and the surroundings. Let us imagine an example. An oldish man steps into the waiting room of a railway station in a small city. He has a dirty grey beard, a ragged and faded overcoat, and burlap sacking wrapped around his feet instead of shoes. What can we give him to do in that place that will have this narrative significance with which we are concerned? Here are four possibilities:

1. He may walk up to a stranger in clerical dress and speak to him in Latin: "Ave, pater." To which the priest may reply, "Quo vadis, frater?"

2. He may walk to the ticket-window and whisper slyly to the ticket-seller, "Say, do you know where a guy can have a good time in New York?"

3. He may ask the ticket-seller, "What is the fare to Hollywood?"

4. If he shuffles through the station and passes the bootblack's stand, the bootblack may call derisively, "Shine? Get a shine!"

In each of these small incidents our interest in what the character does (or says) is sharpened by our curiosity as to what sort of man he is and our realization of where he is. Deed and surroundings and personality unite to sharpen our interest. Such is the combination that gives *narrative significance*, and a substantial amount of such intensified incident will be found in any good story.

Theme. Stories are told for our delight. However, at the risk of seeming to turn a troubadour into a seer and preacher I shall claim that the writer of fiction does more than spread before us characters and places and events so combined that they entertain us with an impression of life intensified. He also prevails upon us to accept the substance of his story as matter which he completely understands. It is a sample of the irony or the harmony, or the farcical ridiculousness, or the

inevitability, or the disconcerting unreasonableness and surprise that await all human beings as time passes and cause and effect follow their course. For the writer of stories has a haunting consciousness of the patterns of human experience. The characters that bustle about so animatedly in his stories follow orbits which are typical. The author sees the general truth in the particular instance. Like the scientist he shows us "the sum of the customs of matter," though he does so to give us aesthetic pleasure, not to discover a truth.

In a narrative this summing up of the customs of matter is usually called the *theme*. In some of the traditional forms of narration this interest in generalizing is obvious. This is true of the fable where the moral is plainly labeled for the reader's benefit. It is true also of the allegory and the parable. It is true of the ancient Greek dramas in which the chorus proclaims to the audience that the woes of Oedipus are such as all mankind must endure. It is true, though less obviously, of contemporary novels like Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* or Dos Passos' *U S A*, where narrative chapters alternate with chapters describing characteristic scenes of American life, or with Newsreels, Camera Eyes, and Biographies. All these devices are intended to make the reader look at life with the double-angled vision of the author, who is at the same time philosopher and teller of tales. Even when no theme is indicated to the reader, it is often a spectral presence in the author's mind, controlling his selection and arrangement of material, like the unseen magnetic force which draws iron filings into patterns.

Conclusion. In summary, it may be said that all which has been pointed out above concerning the art of fiction applies to the special sort of fiction represented in this volume, namely, the short story. The short story has been defined facetiously as a story that is short; it may be described more seriously as a story which aims at the maximum of effect with the minimum of means. Like the other forms of fiction

it is a "com-position," a putting together of parts that may have little interest in themselves but take on a curious significance when combined. The two lovers in Dorothy Parker's *The Sexes* or in Ring Lardner's *Some Like Them Cold* are, separately, pretty dreary people, but put together in a story they become fascinating. The good writer has the talent to discover the latent narrative value in many a combination of people and places and events and clothe it in illusion. The good reader is one who not only enjoys the illusion the writer creates, but also discerns and enjoys the art with which it is produced.

THE COLLEGE SHORT STORY READER

WILLIAM MARCH

Sweet, Who Was the Armourer's Maid

On Saturday nights, when their work for the week is done, the charwomen gather in the steamy basement of the building awaiting their pay. Occasionally they speak of corridors or of difficult baseboards which they have scrubbed in their time, but mostly they sit in silence, their stiff hands curved against their pinned-up skirts, until the manageress comes to check their buckets and mops and to give them the money they have earned. Then they open their envelopes and count the shillings, the half-crowns and the small notes with trembling fingers. Later on, three of the charwomen, Lilian Mitchell, Ella the American, and the German woman Hennie, go to The Queen's Coin, Joe Mallet's public house, for their evening of pleasure.

Joe's pub is conspicuous for its drabness even in its neighborhood of dirt and listless rain. In the daytime, when loaded lorries from the dock rumble past and almost brush the sides of the buildings that line the narrow street, the sign above the door trembles with its wall, and even the glasses behind the bar vibrate. But in spite of its dreariness, The Queen's Coin has a distinction of its own, a uniqueness which has set it apart, for there is a legend that Elizabeth, the Queen of England,

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once stopped there on a summer afternoon and ordered a mug of ale.

When she had finished, she tossed a silver coin in payment, but it fell short, hit the railing edgewise and rolled off among the tables and the empty casks. After she had ridden away, the publican, his barmaid, his wife, and the customers who had stood gaping against the wall came to life and began to search feverishly for the lost piece of silver. At the end of exactly forty-two minutes it was found in the adjoining room, standing upright against the leg of one of the benches. The incident has now passed into the web of English tradition, for on each anniversary of that day the original situation and search is duplicated and the publican, his wife, his barmaid and the patrons who have gathered for the ceremony get down earnestly upon their knees, thrust their rumps into the air and seek for the coin which had already been found more than three hundred years ago.

But the three old women do not go to The Queen's Coin because of its traditions or its historical significance. Their preference for it is due entirely to the fact that they consider Joe Mallet, the present lessee, their particular patron. Once, years before, when Lilian Mitchell was a celebrated beauty at the height of her splendor, Joe, as an errand boy, had brought flowers to her from her admirers. Once she had incredibly given him ten shillings and had told him to buy mittens for his reddened hands and stockings for his thin, gangling legs. He had never mentioned the incident, nor had he identified himself, but, because of his memory, he gave Lilian and her friends free drinks when they had no money and let them sit in his warm public house and talk of their past.

One Saturday night the three wrecked beauties went to The Queen's Coin and entered in single file. They glanced incuriously at Joe's two barmaids, chaste, blonde women who seemed carved from twin blocks of wood and then gilded badly. Sam, the waiter, wiped his forearms on the towel he

wore tucked through his belt, came up at once and spoke to them.

"Coo!" he said. He turned and winked at the twin barmaids, but they paid not the slightest attention to him. "Coo!" he repeated. "Coo! It's narsty wevver we're 'aving. Proper *narsty* wevver it is, not 'arf!"

The old beauties walked through the smoke-filled room and sat at their table in the back. The little thieves and the petty thugs who lined the bar turned at the sound of their hoarse, old women's voices and looked at them a moment, turned their backs and went on with their conversations. Sam came up with the bottle of gin which they invariably bought on these occasions.

Ella, being an American, and for that reason considered more practical than the others, figured the cost of the bottle, divided by three and collected from her companions. When the transaction was completed and the money had been counted against Sam's purplish palm, he filled the glasses. Then the old women clutched their drinks in gnarled fingers, with acorn-swollen nails, and raised three bloated, work-cracked fists, drinking their gin at a single gulp. Almost immediately they felt it flaming through their veins, deadening the present, bringing back the past. Again they drank from filled glasses, and again they felt the fierce impact of the alcohol. They sighed and leaned back against their chairs. This was the moment for which they had worked all week. Their tongues were loosened at last. They could talk again of the old times, the beautiful days that were lost forever.

Lilian put down her empty glass, an expression of sadness in her face. "I never thought I'd come to this," she said. "I never thought I'd end this way." She shivered a little. She was a shapeless woman, with legs slashed across by swollen veins and lips that resembled relaxed bacon-rinds. Her teeth were yellow, broken and decayed. Her nose was pulpy and soiled and threaded throughout with purplish veins. Not one feature

gave any hint of the beauty that Joe alone remembered now, the beauty that had made her famous in her generation.

Hennie nodded her head. "Ja! Ja!" she said. "Immer so. Immer so." She lifted her glass invitingly and put it down, a dreamy look in her eyes as if she listened to a waltz.

"Things would have been different with me, too," said Ella, "only my boy got in trouble in Cleveland." Then she added fiercely: "They framed him, the dirty scuts! They framed him, that's what they done!" She wiped her lips on the back of her hand. "Cleveland is a town in Ohio," she added. "It's the town I come from."

Lilian continued: "Robbie Markham was mad over me, as I told you. Everybody in Mayfair knew about it. Robbie gave me the necklace I was telling you about. He put it around my throat one night and fastened the catch. Afterwards he kissed me back of my ear and said, 'Your neck is like the whitest marble.' " Lilian smiled roguishly and touched the place that her sweetheart had once kissed, but her neck was foul, now, and fallen to pieces. It was patterned, criss-cross, with wrinkles, like the diamond-patched back of a snake. She filled her glass again.

"A fellow in Milwaukee gave me a diamond ring one time," said Ella, "but the next morning he said I stole it offen him while he was drunk, and I had to give it back." She paused a moment, sipped her gin daintily and then continued: "Milwaukee is in the state of Wisconsin. It's a nice town. They made beer there in them days. Maybe they do yet. How do I know?"

Hennie drank her gin slowly, shuddering each time she swallowed. "Ja," she said, smiling vaguely. "Ja, ja, ja." For no apparent reason she began to laugh to herself. "Immer so," she said. "Immer so."

"Robbie used to come to my house to see me, but never when Mr. Ryder was there," said Lilian. "I laughed and told him to forget me, but he took my hands in his and kissed them rever-

ently until I made him stop. 'You're so lovely and unsoiled,' he said. 'You're like an English rose in a hedgerow.' "

She leaned back against the wall, her hair hanging about her face in grayish folds, and as she sat there remembering her triumphs, she kept pushing the falling hair from off her face. A feeling of sadness came over her. Robbie had taught her everything: how to speak, how to dress, how to carry her head. He had brought her the right books to read, had told her the right gossip about the right people and she had never questioned his advice. He had been more like a schoolmaster than a lover, and she had memorized the poems that he had marked as important at the moment, had rehearsed diligently the amusing anecdotes which he had, himself, written for her. And she did not remember, now, what had happened to him at last. It was all so long ago.

"When I was playing in burlesque," said Ella, "I got featured billing. They billed me as Ella DeVoe, the Nineteenth Century Venus. That was in Chicago, in the big state of Illinois."

The two blonde barmaids turned their heads at the same instant, as if their long team work together had made it impossible for them to function separately, and looked blankly at the bloated, garrulous old women, examining for an instant the mottled flesh which hung pendulous from their withering jaws. They raised their eyebrows, touched their gilded hair and turned back to their customers with the same stiff movement of their torsos, their reaching teeth half bared in faint, well-bred cordiality.

Lilian sat with her hands relaxed in her lap, her eyes far away, a slight smile on her lips. "One afternoon I went to walk in the park with my dogs. It was snowing, I remember, but there was no wind to blow it into your face. It fell straight down, without any sound. Then I saw Mr. Ryder coming toward me. We met and walked together through the park. 'Now, Mr. Ryder,' I said, 'you're making a great deal out of

nothing. Robbie doesn't mean anything to me at all, and you know it.' . . . 'I notice, nevertheless, that you're wearing his jewelry,' he said. 'You must give him back his presents. I won't have you taking things from other men!' "

Several strangers had come into the bar and had lined up, and Joe, himself, was serving them. The three old women looked at the newcomers for an instant, and then, as if upon signal, looked down again.

Ella said: "In Atlanta, Georgia, fellows would come into the house and ask for me by name. Real spenders they was, not tightwads like they have these days. 'Where's little Ella tonight?' they'd say to the Madame. 'She's a dandy!' they'd say; 'she sure is a good kid!' Many's the time I've made fifty or seventy-five bucks in a night. But that was in Frisco. 'She's a sweet baby,' they'd say."

Lilian was not listening. "When Mr. Ryder said what he did, I looked up and smiled at him. He was a handsome man. There are no men like him any more, no real gentlemen. He loved me and he spent money like water, but he had a wife in Scotland and two daughters in school on the Continent somewhere. 'You must give up this half-baked poet,' he said. 'Give him back his presents!' The snow was falling all about us. The dogs were covered with snow. They kept shaking themselves and looking at us with sad eyes. When they shook off the snow the bells on their harness tinkled. I felt happy all of a sudden. Then I saw a beggarwoman walking toward us through the snow. I took off the necklace and dropped it into her cup. 'Take it, you pitiful old thing,' I said. 'Take it! Take it!' "

The doors pushed forward and three waterfront women entered with their sailors. The women were young and exuberant with full, rouged mouths and black, beaded lashes. They were, already, a little tipsy, and they swayed across the room with noisy good-nature, crowding themselves at the table to the right. When they were seated with their men, one of the girls tilted back her chair and laughed loudly.

Ella said: "Mind your manners, Miss!" She straightened her hat and pulled her chair closer to the table. "Mind your manners!" she repeated fiercely, but under her breath, as if she addressed her known world and knew the futility of protest.

"When Mr. Ryder left me at my door, I went upstairs to dress, and I found Robbie waiting for me. He had brought a new book, a volume of poems written by a Mr. Swinburne, a friend of his whom he admired greatly and who was fashionable at the time. He had marked the passages that he wanted me to memorize, and he read them aloud to me while I dressed." Lilian closed her eyes and smiled, reliving her happy past. "I even remember a part of the poems to this day," she said. She bent closer to her companions, to make herself heard above the merriment of the sailors and their girls, and recited slowly, her lips smiling a little, her brows drawn together:—

> "Meseemeth I heard cry and groan
> That sweet, who was the armourer's maid,
> For her lost youth did make sore moan
> And right upon this wise she said:
> 'Ah, fierce old age with foul bald head,
> To slay fair things thou art over fain,
> Who holdeth me? Who? Would God I were dead;
> Would God I were well dead and slain!' "

She lifted her head proudly at her feat of memory, and the folds of sagged flesh which hung pendent and dead from her cheeks, and the wrecked line which had once been her throat, trembled to her pride. She knew that neither Ella nor Hennie had been listening to her; that they were not concerned with such transitory things as poems. They were, she knew, thinking of their own triumphs instead, but she did not care. She was not really speaking to them, after all.

"New Orleans was the place in the old days," said Ella. "*There* was the town for real spenders and for good times! Men weren't tightwads, the way they are now." She straightened, turned and looked angrily at the young woman whose chair

pressed hers, whose voice drowned out her own. "Mind your manners, Miss," she repeated sullenly, the words coming from her lax, toothless mouth with a blurred lisp.

The three old women sat silent for a time, staring with patient exasperation at the noisy table to their right and then glancing down at their own work-cracked hands. They finished their bottle and looked at each other significantly. They rose, pushed back their chairs and straightened their clothing, for their evening was spoiled and there was no sense, now, in trying to prolong it. They walked with grave unsteadiness to the door while the gilded, spinsterish barmaids stared at their retreating backs with the dispassionate calmness of primitive woodwork. A moment later they were on the pavement outside, swaying there, leaning against the side of the building for support.

In the street to the left were pushcarts pulled up to the curb, and housewives milled about and jostled one another under the harsh, revealing flares. They pulled their shawls more closely about their shoulders, pinching the vegetables and the pale fruit, turning over the shoddy material spread before them and examining it thriftily before they spent their sixpences. From the river there came a liquid, washing sound and the sharp smell of minor putrefaction. A peddler, trundling his barrow, was approaching. When he saw the three swaying, undecided old women, he stopped his cart and showed the cheap lace and stockings that he sold, holding them spread on his forearm.

Lilian rubbed her roughened hands over her face. "That night I wore a gown of mousseline peau de soie, fitted to the figure, which Mr. Ryder had bought for me in Paris. Across the upper ruffle of the bodice, and down the side of one panel, was a flock of black swallows in full flight." She leaned against the wall and lifted her pouched face to the glare of the gaslights. She was talking too loudly, she felt, a thing which

Robbie had so often warned her about, but she was unable to stop now.

The peddler, who did not understand English very well, looked at her a moment and then, patiently, began to repack his wares. Two soldiers on leave and a workman stopped, stared at the old women and laughed.

Lilian began to throw her arms about with stiff, grotesque gestures. "When I came out of my boudoir, Robbie Markham put down the book of poems. He looked at me a moment in wonder and said: 'A man could die for you and not regret it!' He took my hands and kissed the tip of each finger. 'These little, white hands,' he said. 'So lovely. So helpless.' He took me in his arms and held me. He said, 'You're like a pink rose with the dew on it.' "

A police constable came over slowly. "What's the matter 'ere?" he asked. He turned to Ella and permitted himself a pleasantry. He said: "You'd better take this rosebud back to the conservatory, Miss, before I do my duty and run her in for disturbing the peace."

A man in a plaid cap grinned toothlessly under the gas flares and spoke: "Are you sure it was a *rose* he called you, Grandma?"

The three old beauties swayed, righted themselves and passed unsteadily between the avenue of flares, walking in single file on the outer edges of their feet with the springless, mechanical gait of old people whose bones have settled to habitual rhythms, their elbows drawn close to their flanks as if there were still mops trailing behind them, their taut arms straight down as if they bore without release the totaled weight of all the scouring water they had ever lifted.

"The scuts!" said Ella fiercely. "The dirty scuts! They frame you, that's what the police do to you. Even in this country they frame you!" She shoved the straggling hair out of her eyes. "The scuts!" she repeated. "The bloody scuts!"

But Lilian was speaking again, her head nodding to her words: "Between the panels, the skirt was powdered with gold and decorated with bows of white satin antique, with a fringe of gold. The sleeves were gold powdered mousseline and the flounces were of plain mousseline edged with d'Anencon lace, four inches deep."

"Ja," said Hennie in a high, delighted voice. "Ja! Ja! Ja!" But her words were not meant for Lilian, nor for any living thing in this world. She spoke, instead, to the man who stood forever at her elbow, the dead man who walked beside her wherever she went. She cupped her hands over her shapeless belly, nodding her head with the timed jerkiness of an ingenious toy. "Ja!" she continued eagerly. "Ja! Ja!"—her face yielding and yet coquettish, her voice soft and delighted.

ALBERT MALTZ

Afternoon in the Jungle

CHARLES FALLON, AGED THIRteen, jiggled a hand grenade in his palm and waited for the traffic lights to change. When the Eighth Avenue bus moved off, he took cover behind a snow pile. At twenty yards, he looped the deadly missile high into the air. It exploded squarely on top of the bus. Charlie smiled with satisfaction and scooped up snow for another grenade.

He progressed slowly up Hudson Street, killing time, a smallish, wiry, rather white-faced boy with tight lips. At the corner of Perry he found an envelope containing one million two hundred and thirty-four dollars. He dropped his grenade and crossed the avenue to a pawnshop. It was Sunday and there was a steel-mesh gate in front of the door, but Charlie made a wish and got inside. He helped himself to a flashlight, a pair of ice skates, a Boy Scout knife, binoculars, a picture of Mary in the Manger, and a lot of other things. He left a hundred-thousand-dollar bill in payment.

At Twelfth Street he crossed the avenue again. He wandered down Greenwich, stopping to gaze at the pictures in the lobby of a movie house. He decided that Anita Louise was nicer-looking than a stuck-up like Norma Shearer. He kissed Anita Louise. They sat on the edge of her million-dollar swimming

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pool and he kissed her again. She was about to tell him how swell he was when the ticket-taker came over and said, "Beat, kid." He scuffed away.

At Eleventh Street and Seventh Avenue he planted himself before the window of a bakery. In rapid succession he ate a chocolate cake, a napoleon, a charlotte russe, and two twenty-five-cent peach cakes with whipped cream. He was just about to buy the whole bakery when a lady came out and told him to stop leaning against the glass and move along.

Bored, he turned down Seventh Avenue and started home. Between Commerce and Morton he went into a candy store where he occasionally traded. The stout proprietress wheezed over to the counter.

"How much is the caramels?" Charlie asked.

"Two for a penny."

"And these?"

"Four for a penny."

"And the lollipops?"

"A penny apiece. Which do you want?"

"I'm going home and get some money. I'll be back in eight minutes."

He crossed the street again and walked down to Houston, wishing he could buy some candy. He knew a way to make one caramel last half an hour. You put it on your tongue and sucked it. It took will power not to chew it right down, but the sweet taste stayed with you longer. And you avoided the toothache. He took off his soaking mittens and blew on his hands. He wished it weren't Sunday. His neighborhood was like a cemetery on Sunday because the factories were closed.

A bus approached, going south. Old Man Sheehy and his wife, who lived in Charlie's house, ran across Varick to catch it. The bus stopped. The old couple hurried forward and as Mr. Sheehy took his hand from his pocket, a fifty-cent piece dropped to the sidewalk. He made a frantic grab for it, but the coin rolled onto the subway grille and dropped to the bottom

of the pit. Muttering, the old man stepped up into the bus. He held the door back with his hand and shouted out to Charlie, who had run over to the grille, "If you find it, Charlie, I'll give you a dime!"

"Sure," said Charlie.

The bus moved off and Charlie raced away. He would need chewing gum and a string to do the lifting. Fifty cents! He had retrieved pennies from subway grilles—once even a dime—but this was the first chance he had ever had at so much money. It would be the simplest thing in the world, of course, to tell Old Man Sheehy that he had not been able to find it.

He covered the distance to his house on Downing Street at a run. He was too excited to remember the broken step on the second flight of stairs and his right foot slipped through, flinging him headlong and giving him a terrible crack on the shin. He limped up the remaining three flights with tears in his eyes.

His mother was sitting at the window, darning.

"Ma, can I *please* have three pennies?" he asked. Phrased as a question, his words expressed a command. He had learned long ago that his mother always yielded to bullying.

"Hush, for goodness!" she said. "Your father's asleep. Now, why do you come in here with your wet rubbers and filthy the floor?"

"I'm going right out again. Just give me the pennies, Ma."

"I can't give you pennies. You had a penny for candy on Tuesday."

"Ma, I got to have them. Look, there's a dime that fell down in the subway place. If I had some chewing gum, I could get it up."

"So that's it? You were trying to hold out on me, weren't you?" She laughed softly. "I'll give you one penny, not three, and you'll have to give it back."

"One's no good. I gotta have three. I can't do anything with one. It doesn't make a big enough piece of gum, don't you see, Ma?"

Mrs. Fallon went into the kitchen and came back with her change purse. "I only have two pennies," she said. "Beside a dime for church tonight."

"Well, give me that. I'll—" He stopped to sneeze. "I'll change it. You'll get it all back, honest."

"No. I can't risk it." She gave him the two pennies.

Glumly, Charlie accepted them. This would make his task harder, but he knew that his mother was inflexible about church money as about nothing else.

"And I expect the two pennies back," she said.

"O.K." He was already busy in the kitchen, searching for a string.

"Ah, yes," his mother said, in the long-suffering whine he knew so well, "in the old days, if you'd come to your father or me for a penny, we'd given you a nickel. If you'd asked for a nickel, you'd get a dime."

Charlie found a ball of heavy cord, cut off a ten-foot length, and stuffed it quickly into his pocket.

"But now your father's a cripple, poor man," his mother went on. "Limping where other men walk, working at night when other men work at day, he's grateful for the little he has."

"O.K., Ma, I'm going," said Charlie. Without waiting for an answer, he banged out. He told himself that all mothers were a pain and fathers worse. Catch the old man giving up a glass of beer to buy his kid a chocolate bar.

He ran down the block and around the corner to the candy store on Carmine Street. He bought two boxes of Chiclets and emptied them both into his mouth. The gum had to be moist and pliable or else the coin wouldn't stick to it. He trotted across Varick, chewing hard but on the right side of his mouth only, so that he wouldn't get a toothache. Near the bus sign he lay down full length on the icy grille. The concrete base at the bottom of the pit was covered with debris and snow and little puddles of water. Methodically he began to search for

the coin, inching himself along from one spot to another on the grille. His heart pumped with excitement and an image of the bakery window danced in his head.

Ten minutes passed with no result, and he stopped to blow on his hands. Then he returned to his task.

He located the coin. It lay half in a puddle of water, half on the concrete base—a difficult target. With a tight little smile on his lips, he knotted the end of his cord several times and wound the chewing gum around the knot, giving it a broad, flat base. A wrist loop at the other end of the cord prevented his losing it. Then, after thrusting the wad of gum into his mouth for a last moistening, he lowered it carefully to the bottom.

Working intently, he did not notice the man who had come up behind him, a small, shabby man of about forty-five whose thin face was reddened by the wind but was liverish gray beneath the surface color.

Charlie heard him before he saw him; the man's breathing was labored, as though he were straining at a heavy burden. The boy looked up briefly and went back to his work. He was concentrating upon the most difficult part of his job. The wad of gum was not sufficiently heavy to make a plumb line, yet he must drop it with some force on the coin in order to make it take hold. It might take a hundred trials to achieve one accurate strike.

The man watched in silence for a moment. Then he dropped to his knees by Charlie's side, exclaiming in a hoarse tone, "Fifty cents, eh?" He peered down at the swaying length of cord above the coin. "Ah, it's hard that way, isn't it?" he asked softly.

Charlie didn't answer.

The man peered down to watch another trial. "Sure, the gum gets solid right away in this cold," he commented. "It don't look to me like you'll make it, kid. And it's getting dark.

You need real tools for this job. You'll never get it this way."

Without looking up, Charlie said loudly, "Who's asking you?"

The man got to his feet. Quickly he glanced all around. There was no one in sight. He stepped back a few paces and unbuttoned his overcoat. Secured to the inside of his coat by leather straps were four lengths of broom handle, whittled to reduce their thickness, each about three feet long, each fitted at one end with a rubber socket by which it could be joined to another length. With practiced efficiency, he connected them. At the tip of the final length there was a small rubber suction cup. He stepped forward, fitted the end of his pole neatly into the grate, and, dropping to his knees, thrust it to the bottom. "I'll show you how a professional does it," he said lightly. He kept his eyes averted from the boy's face. "Now, this is one method. Another is cup grease. With cup grease you can pick up a bracelet. But when you spot some change, a suction cup is—"

"What's the idea?" Charlie cried out in fury. "What do you think you're doing?"

"I'll show you how a professional does it, kid."

"Get out of here!" With his left hand, Charlie tugged savagely at the man's arm. "Get out of here!"

The man fended him off, laughing in a hoarse tone that had no humor in it. "What's the difference? You wouldn't get it," he said. "Why let it lay there for somebody else?"

"The hell I won't get it!" Charlie cried. "You leave it alone. It's mine. Please, Mista."

"I'll give you a nickel," said the man.

Charlie pulled up his string with decision and crammed it into his pocket. Then, rising, he stepped behind the man and kicked him viciously in the small of his back. The man cried out in pain. Instantly Charlie retreated a dozen feet.

"That's a hell of a thing to do," the man groaned, holding his back. "I'll break your neck, you little rat. You almost made me

drop my pole." They glared at each other for a moment, motionless and undecided. There were thirty years between them, yet in a way they looked startlingly alike. Both were small, the boy as boy, the man as man; both were drawn, hard-bitten.

The man kneeled down again, watching Charlie carefully. He lowered the pole but kept his head raised. Charlie stood indecisively. Then he ran to a snow pile by the curbstone. The man shifted to face him. "You come near me and I'll break your neck," he said. "I'm telling you. Beat it. I won't even give you the nickel now. I'm mad."

Charlie grabbed a chunk of ice from the snow pile. He flung it with all his strength. It missed by a foot, but the man was frightened and jumped to his feet, pulling up the pole. Charlie retreated behind the snow pile. Trembling, eyes fixed on his enemy, he clawed under the crust of ice.

"You're looking for trouble, ain't you?" the man said bitterly. He glanced up and down the deserted, darkening avenue. "You think I like this?" he asked suddenly. "Do you think I like to fight with a kid like you over fifty cents?"

A snowball struck his knee, just below the protection of his frayed overcoat. He shook his fist, his voice swelling with anger. "I'll give you trouble if you want it, you kid!" He stopped, panting for breath. Then he dropped the pole and hurled himself forward. Charlie darted out of reach. A snowball, almost pure ice, struck the man full in the forehead. He clapped a hand to his head, half sobbing in rage and pain.

"How do you like that, you skunk?" the boy cried.

The man chased him, but Charlie was twice as agile and kept the snow barrier between them. Within a minute the man stopped, his mouth open, a hand pressed to his heaving chest. Without uttering a word, he went back to the grille and crouched down, lowering his pole.

Frantic, the boy varied his attack. He came past at an angling run, from behind, and slammed down a piece of loose ice. It struck the man at the base of his neck. His body quiv-

ered, but he didn't turn. He was raising the pole to slip it through another opening in the grille. Charlie made another rush, this time determined to use his feet. Swearing, the man leaped up to meet him, catching the boy's arm as he veered off in terror and swinging him in. He had him, gripped by both arms. The pole lay on the grille between them.

"I ought to break your neck!" he cried, shaking him. "I ought to break your ratty little neck! But I'm not going to, see? You're a kid. But you listen—"

Charlie twisted hard, broke free, and at the same moment stamped on the man's foot. He ran to the security of the snow pile. The man stood looking at him blankly, his face twisted in pain. "Oh, my Jesus," he said, "what a little gutter rat! Did I hurt you? Did I do anything to you when I had the chance? I was going to make you a proposition." A snowball struck him in the chest. "All right," he said. "I can't get it if you don't let me. You can't get if I don't let you. We're both going to lose it. It's getting dark. I'll split with you. I'll give you twenty-five cents."

"No!" Charlie cried. "It's mine!" His whole body was shaking.

"Don't you see you can't get it without real tools?" The man was pleading now. "Your gum ain't no good in this cold weather."

"It's mine."

"Jesus, you found it, I'll admit it," the man said. "But I got a suction cup. I can get it for both of us."

"No."

"Jesus Christ, I got to have some of it!" the man cried, his voice corroded by shame and bitterness. "This is my *business,* kid. It's all I do. Can't you understand? I been walking all day. I ain't found a thing. You got to let me have some of it. You got to!"

"No."

The man flung out his hands. "Oh, you kid, you kid!" he

cried despairingly. "If you was ten years older, you'd understand. Do you think I like to do this? If you was ten years older, I could talk to you. You'd understand."

Charlie's lips tightened. His white face, spotted by the cold, was filled with rage. "If I was ten years older, I'd beat your face in," he said.

The man bent painfully and picked up the pole. Limping slightly, his hand pressed to the small of his back, he walked away. He was crying.

Charlie stood trembling in triumph, his face turned to stone.

It had become dark.

RING LARDNER

Some Like Them Cold

N. Y., Aug. 3.

DEAR MISS GILLESPIE: How about our bet now as you bet me I would forget all about you the minute I hit the big town and would never write you a letter. Well girlie it looks like you lose so pay me. Seriously we will call all bets off as I am not the kind that bet on a sure thing and it sure was a sure thing that I would not forget a girlie like you and all that is worrying me is whether it may not be the other way round and you are wondering who this fresh guy is that is writeing you this letter. I bet you are so will try and refreshen your memory.

Well girlie I am the handsome young man that was wondering round the Lasalle st. station Monday and "happened" to sit down beside of a mighty pretty girlie who was waiting to meet her sister from Toledo and the train was late and I am glad of it because if it had not of been that little girlie and I would never of met. So for once I was a lucky guy but still I guess it was time I had some luck as it was certainly tough luck for you and I to both be liveing in Chi all that time and never get together till a half hour before I was leaveing town for good.

Still "better late than never" you know and maybe we can

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make up for lost time though it looks like we would have to do our makeing up at long distants unless you make good on your threat and come to N.Y. I wish you would do that little thing girlie as it looks like that was the only way we would get a chance to play round together as it looks like they was little or no chance of me comeing back to Chi as my whole future is in the big town. N.Y. is the only spot and specially for a man that expects to make my liveing in the song writeing game as here is the Mecca for that line of work and no matter how good a man may be they don't get no recognition unless they live in N.Y.

Well girlie you asked me to tell you all about my trip. Well I remember you saying that you would give anything to be makeing it yourself but as far as the trip itself was conserned you ought to be thankfull you did not have to make it as you would of sweat your head off. I know I did specially wile going through Ind. Monday P. M. but Monday night was the worst of all trying to sleep and finely I give it up and just layed there with the prespiration rolling off of me though I was laying on top of the covers and nothing on but my underwear.

Yesterday was not so bad as it rained most of the A. M. comeing through N.Y. state and in the P. M. we road along side of the Hudson all P. M. Some river girlie and just looking at it makes a man forget all about the heat and everything else except a certain girlie who I seen for the first time Monday and then only for a half hour but she is the kind of a girlie that a man don't need to see her only once and they would be no danger of forgetting her. There I guess I better lay off that subject or you will think I am a "fresh guy."

Well that is about all to tell you about the trip only they was one amuseing incidence that come off yesterday which I will tell you. Well they was a dame got on the train at Toledo Monday and had the birth opp. mine but I did not see nothing of her that night as I was out smokeing till late and she hit the hay early but yesterday A. M. she come in the dinner and sit at the same table with me and tried to make me and it was so raw

that the dinge waiter seen it and give me the wink and of course I paid no tension and I waited till she got through so as they would be no danger of her folling me out but she stopped on the way out to get a tooth pick and when I come out she was out on the platform with it so I tried to brush right by but she spoke up and asked me what time it was and I told her and she said she geussed her watch was slow so I said maybe it just seemed slow on acct. of the company it was in.

I don't know if she got what I was driveing at or not but any way she give up trying to make me and got off at Albany. She was a good looker but I have no time for gals that tries to make strangers on a train.

Well if I don't quit you will think I am writeing a book but will expect a long letter in answer to this letter and we will see if you can keep your promise like I have kept mine. Don't dissapoint me girlie as I am all alone in a large city and hearing from you will keep me from getting home sick for old Chi though I never thought so much of the old town till I found out you lived there. Don't think that is kidding girlie as I mean it.

You can address me at this hotel as it looks like I will be here right along as it is on 47ty st. right off of old Broadway and handy to everything and am only paying $21 per wk. for my rm. and could of got one for $16 but without bath but am glad to pay the differents as am lost without my bath in the A. M. and sometimes at night too.

Tomorrow I expect to commence fighting the "battle of Broadway" and will let you know how I come out that is if you answer this letter. In the mean wile girlie au reservoir and don't do nothing I would not do.

Your new friend (?)

CHAS. F. LEWIS.

Chicago, Ill., Aug. 6.

MY DEAR MR. LEWIS: Well, that certainly was a "surprise party" getting your letter and you are certainly a "wonder

man" to keep your word as I am afraid most men of your sex are gay deceivers but maybe you are "different." Any way it sure was a surprise and will gladly pay the bet if you will just tell me what it was we bet. Hope it was not money as I am a "working girl" but if it was not more than a dollar or two will try to dig it up even if I have to "beg, borrow or steal."

Suppose you will think me a "case" to make a bet and then forget what it was, but you must remember, Mr. Man, that I had just met you and was "dazzled." Joking aside I was rather "fussed" and will tell you why. Well, Mr. Lewis, I suppose you see lots of girls like the one you told me about that you saw on the train who tried to "get acquainted" but I want to assure you that I am not one of those kind and sincerely hope you will believe me when I tell you that you was the first man I ever spoke to meeting them like that and my friends and the people who know me would simply faint if they knew I ever spoke to a man without a "proper introduction."

Believe me, Mr. Lewis, I am not that kind and I don't know now why I did it only that you was so "different" looking if you know what I mean and not at all like the kind of men that usually try to force their attentions on every pretty girl they see. Lots of times I act on impulse and let my feelings run away from me and sometimes I do things on the impulse of the moment which I regret them later on, and that is what I did this time, but hope you won't give me cause to regret it and I know you won't as I know you are not that kind of a man a specially after what you told me about the girl on the train. But any way as I say, I was in a "daze" so can't remember what it was we bet, but will try and pay it if it does not "break" me.

Sis's train got in about ten minutes after yours had gone and when she saw me what do you think was the first thing she said? Well, Mr. Lewis, she said: "Why Mibs (That is a pet name some of my friends have given me) what has happened to you? I never seen you have as much color." So I passed it off with some remark about the heat and changed the subject as I

certainly was not going to tell her that I had just been talking to a man who I had never met or she would of dropped dead from the shock. Either that or she would not of believed me as it would be hard for a person who knows me well to imagine me doing a thing like that as I have quite a reputation for "squelching" men who try to act fresh. I don't mean anything personal by that, Mr. Lewis, as am a good judge of character and could tell without you telling me that you are not that kind.

Well, Sis and I have been on the "go" ever since she arrived as I took yesterday and today off so I could show her the "sights" though she says she would be perfectly satisfied to just sit in the apartment and listen to me "rattle on." Am afraid I am a great talker, Mr. Lewis, but Sis says it is as good as a show to hear me talk as I tell things in such a different way as I cannot help from seeing the humorous side of everything and she says she never gets tired of listening to me, but of course she is my sister and thinks the world of me, but she really does laugh like she enjoyed my craziness.

Maybe I told you that I have a tiny little apartment which a girl friend of mine and I have together and it is hardly big enough to turn round in, but still it is "home" and I am a great home girl and hardly ever care to go out evenings except occasionally to the theatre or dance. But even if our "nest" is small we are proud of it and Sis complimented us on how cozy it is and how "homey" it looks and she said she did not see how we could afford to have everything so nice and Edith (my girl friend) said: "Mibs deserves all the credit for that. I never knew a girl who could make a little money go a long ways like she can." Well, of course she is my best friend and always saying nice things about me, but I do try and I hope I get results. Have always said that good taste and being careful is a whole lot more important than lots of money though it is nice to have it.

You must write and tell me how you are getting along in the

"battle of Broadway" (I laughed when I read that) and whether the publishers like your songs though I know they will. Am crazy to hear them and hear you play the piano as I love good jazz music even better than classical, though I suppose it is terrible to say such a thing. But I usually say just what I think though sometimes I wish afterwards I had not of. But still I believe it is better for a girl to be her own self and natural instead of always acting. But am afraid I will never have a chance to hear you play unless you come back to Chi and pay us a visit as my "threat" to come to New York was just a "threat" and I don't see any hope of ever getting there unless some rich New Yorker should fall in love with me and take me there to live. Fine chance for poor little me, eh Mr. Lewis?

Well, I guess I have "rattled on" long enough and you will think I am writing a book unless I quit and besides, Sis has asked me as a special favor to make her a pie for dinner. Maybe you don't know it, Mr. Man, but I am quite famous for my pie and pastry, but I don't suppose a "genius" is interested in common things like that.

Well, be sure and write soon and tell me what N.Y. is like and all about it and don't forget the little girlie who was "bad" and spoke to a strange man in the station and have been blushing over it ever since.

Your friend (?)

MABELLE GILLESPIE.

N. Y., Aug. 10.

DEAR GIRLIE: I bet you will think I am a fresh guy commenceing that way but Miss Gillespie is too cold and a man can not do nothing cold in this kind of weather specially in this man's town which is the hottest place I ever been in and I guess maybe the reason why New Yorkers is so bad is because they think they are all ready in H —— and can not go no worse place no matter how they behave themselves. Honest girlie I certainly envy you being where there is a breeze off the old

Lake and Chi may be dirty but I never heard of nobody dying because they was dirty but four people died here yesterday on acct. of the heat and I seen two different women flop right on Broadway and had to be taken away in the ambulance and it could not of been because they was dressed too warm because it would be impossible for the women here to leave off any more cloths.

Well have not had much luck yet in the battle of Broadway as all the heads of the big music publishers is out of town on their vacation and the big boys is the only ones I will do business with as it would be silly for a man with the stuff I have got to waste my time on somebody that is just on the staff and have not got the final say. But I did play a couple of my numbers for the people up to Levy's and Goebel's and they went crazy over them in both places. So it looks like all I have to do is wait for the big boys to get back and then play my numbers for them and I will be all set. What I want is to get taken on the staff of one of the big firms as that gives a man the inside and they will plug your numbers more if you are on the staff. In the mean wile have not got nothing to worry me but am just seeing the sights of the big town as have saved up enough money to play round for a wile and any way a man that can play piano like I can don't never have to worry about starveing. Can certainly make the old music box talk girlie and am always good for a $75 or $100 job.

Well have been here a week now and on the go every minute and I thought I would be lonesome down here but no chance of that as I have been treated fine by the people I have met and have sure met a bunch of them. One of the boys liveing in the hotel is a vaudeville actor and he is a member of the Friars club and took me over there to dinner the other night and some way another the bunch got wise that I could play piano so of course I had to sit down and give them some of my numbers and everybody went crazy over them. One of the boys I met there was Paul Sears the song writer but he just writes the

lyrics and has wrote a bunch of hits and when he heard some of my melodies he called me over to one side and said he would like to work with me on some numbers. How is that girlie as he is one of the biggest hit writers in N.Y.

N.Y. has got some mighty pretty girlies and I guess it would not be hard to get acquainted with them and in fact several of them has tried to make me since I been here but I always figure that a girl must be something wrong with her if she tries to make a man that she don't know nothing about so I pass them all up. But I did meet a couple of pips that a man here in the hotel went up on Riverside Drive to see them and insisted on me going along and they got on some way that I could make a piano talk so they was nothing but I must play for them so I sit down and played some of my own stuff and they went crazy over it.

One of the girls wanted I should come up and see her again, and I said I might but I think I better keep away as she acted like she wanted to vamp me and I am not the kind that likes to play round with a gal just for their company and dance with them etc. but when I see the right gal that will be a different thing and she won't have to beg me to come and see her as I will camp right on her trail till she says yes. And it won't be none of these N.Y. fly by nights neither. They are all right to look at but a man would be a sucker to get serious with them as they might take you up and the next thing you know you would have a wife on your hands that don't know a dish rag from a waffle iron.

Well girlie will quit and call it a day as it is too hot to write any more and I guess I will turn on the cold water and lay in the tub a wile and then turn in. Don't forget to write to

Your friend,

CHAS. F. LEWIS.

DEAR MR. MAN: Hope you won't think me a "silly Billy" for starting my letter that way but "Mr. Lewis" is so formal and

"Charles" is too much the other way and any way I would not dare call a man by their first name after only knowing them only two weeks. Though I may as well confess that Charles is my favorite name for a man and have always been crazy about it as it was my father's name. Poor old dad, he died of cancer three years ago, but left enough insurance so that mother and we girls were well provided for and do not have to do anything to support ourselves though I have been earning my own living for two years to make things easier for mother and also because I simply can't bear to be doing nothing as I feel like a "drone." So I flew away from the "home nest" though mother felt bad about it as I was her favorite and she always said I was such a comfort to her as when I was in the house she never had to worry about how things would go.

But there I go gossiping about my domestic affairs just like you would be interested in them though I don't see how you could be though personly I always like to know all about my friends, but I know men are different so will try and not bore you any longer. Poor Man, I certainly feel sorry for you if New York is as hot as all that. I guess it has been very hot in Chi, too, at least everybody has been complaining about how terrible it is. Suppose you will wonder why I say "I guess" and you will think I ought to know if it is hot. Well, sir, the reason I say "I guess" is because I don't feel the heat like others do or at least I don't let myself feel it. That sounds crazy I know, but don't you think there is a good deal in mental suggestion and not letting yourself feel things? I believe that if a person simply won't allow themselves to be affected by disagreeable things, why such things won't bother them near as much. I know it works with me and that is the reason why I am never cross when things go wrong and "keep smiling" no matter what happens and as far as the heat is concerned, why I just don't let myself feel it and my friends say I don't even look hot no matter if the weather is boiling and Edith, my girl friend,

often says that I am like a breeze and it cools her off just to have me come in the room. Poor Edie suffers terribly during the hot weather and says it almost makes her mad at me to see how cool and unruffled I look when everybody else is perspiring and have red faces etc.

I laughed when I read what you said about New York being so hot that people thought it was the "other place." I can appreciate a joke, Mr. Man, and that one did not go "over my head." Am still laughing at some of the things you said in the station though they probably struck me funnier than they would most girls as I always see the funny side and sometimes something is said and I laugh and the others wonder what I am laughing at as they cannot see anything in it themselves, but it is just the way I look at things so of course I cannot explain to them why I laughed and they think I am crazy. But I had rather part with almost anything rather than my sense of humour as it helps me over a great many rough spots.

Sis has gone back home though I would of liked to of kept her here much longer, but she had to go though she said she would of liked nothing better than to stay with me and just listen to me "rattle on." She always says it is just like a show to hear me talk as I always put things in such a funny way and for weeks after she has been visiting me she thinks of some of the things I said and laughs over them. Since she left Edith and I have been pretty quiet though poor Edie wants to be on the "go" all the time and tries to make me go out with her every evening to the pictures and scolds me when I say I had rather stay home and read and calls me a "book worm." Well, it is true that I had rather stay home with a good book than go to some crazy old picture and the last two nights I have been reading myself to sleep with Robert W. Service's poems. Don't you love Service or don't you care for "highbrow" writings?

Personly there is nothing I love more than to just sit and read a good book or sit and listen to somebody play the piano,

I mean if they can really play and I really believe I like popular music better than the classical though I suppose that is a terrible thing to confess, but I love all kinds of music but a specially the piano when it is played by somebody who can really play.

Am glad you have not "fallen" for the "ladies" who have tried to make your acquaintance in New York. You are right in thinking there must be something wrong with girls who try to "pick up" strange men as no girl with self respect would do such a thing and when I say that, Mr. Man, I know you will think it is a funny thing for me to say on account of the way our friendship started, but I mean it and I assure you that was the first time I ever done such a thing in my life and would never of thought of doing it had I not known you were the right kind of a man as I flatter myself that I am a good judge of character and can tell pretty well what a person is like by just looking at them and I assure you I had made up my mind what kind of a man you were before I allowed myself to answer your opening remark. Otherwise I am the last girl in the world that would allow myself to speak to a person without being introduced to them.

When you write again you must tell me all about the girl on Riverside Drive and what she looks like and if you went to see her again and all about her. Suppose you will think I am a little old "curiosity shop" for asking all those questions and will wonder why I want to know. Well, sir, I won't tell you why, so there, but I insist on you answering all questions and will scold you if you don't. Maybe you will think the reason why I am so curious is because I am "jealous" of the lady in question. Well, sir, I won't tell you whether I am or not, but will keep you "guessing." Now, don't you wish you knew?

Must close or you will think I am going to "rattle on" forever or maybe you have all ready become disgusted and torn my letter up. If so all I can say is poor little me—she was a nice little girl and meant well, but the man did not appreciate her.

There! Will stop or you will think I am crazy if you do not all ready.

Yours (?)

MAYBELLE.

N. Y., Aug. 20.

DEAR GIRLIE: Well girlie I suppose you thought I was never going to answer your letter but have been busier than a one armed paper hanger the last week as have been working on a number with Paul Sears who is one of the best lyric writers in N.Y. and has turned out as many hits as Berlin or Davis or any of them. And believe me girlie he has turned out another hit this time that is he and I have done it together. It is all done now and we are just waiting for the best chance to place it but will not place it nowheres unless we get the right kind of a deal but maybe will publish it ourselves.

The song is bound to go over big as Sears has wrote a great lyric and I have give it a great tune or at least every body that has heard it goes crazy over it and it looks like it would go over bigger than any song since Mammy and would not be surprised to see it come out the hit of the year. If it is handled right we will make a bbl. of money and Sears says it is a cinch we will clean up as much as $25000 apiece which is pretty fair for one song but this one is not like the most of them but has got a great lyric and I have wrote a melody that will knock them out of their seats. I only wish you could hear it girlie and hear it the way I play it. I had to play it over and over about 50 times at the Friars last night.

I will copy down the lyric of the chorus so you can see what it is like and get the idea of the song though of course you can't tell much about it unless you hear it played and sang. The title of the song is When They're Like You and here is the chorus:

"Some like them hot, some like them cold.
Some like them when they're not too darn old.
Some like them fat, some like them lean.

Some like them only at sweet sixteen.
Some like them dark, some like them light.
Some like them in the park, late at night.
Some like them fickle, some like them true,
But the time I like them is when they're like you."

How is that for a lyric and I only wish I could play my melody for you as you would go nuts over it but will send you a copy as soon as the song is published and you can get some of your friends to play it over for you and I know you will like it though it is a different melody when I play it or when somebody else plays it.

Well girlie you will see how busy I have been and am libel to keep right on being busy as we are not going to let the grass grow under our feet but as soon as we have got this number placed we will get busy on another one as a couple like that will put me on Easy st. even if they don't go as big as we expect but even 25 grand is a big bunch of money and if a man could only turn out one hit a year and make that much out of it I would be on Easy st. and no more hammering on the old music box in some cabaret.

Who ever we take the song to we will make them come across with one grand for advance royaltys and that will keep me going till I can turn out another one. So the future looks bright and rosey to yours truly and I am certainly glad I come to the big town though sorry I did not do it a whole lot quicker.

This is a great old town girlie and when you have lived here a wile you wonder how you ever stood for a burg like Chi which is just a hick town along side of this besides being dirty etc. and a man is a sucker to stay there all their life specially a man in my line of work as N.Y. is the Mecca for a man that has got the musical gift. I figure that all the time I spent in Chi I was just wasteing my time and never really started to live till I come down here and I have to laugh when I think of the boys out there that is trying to make a liveing in the song writeing

game and most of them starve to death all their life and the first week I am down here I meet a man like Sears and the next thing you know we have turned out a song that will make us a fortune.

Well girlie you asked me to tell you about the girlie up on the Drive that tried to make me and asked me to come and see her again. Well I can assure you you have no reasons to be jealous in that quarter as I have not been back to see her as I figure it is wasteing my time to play round with a dame like she that wants to go out somewheres every night and if you married her she would want a house on 5th ave. with a dozen servants so I have passed her up as that is not my idea of home.

What I want when I get married is a real home where a man can stay home and work and maybe have a few of his friends in once in a wile and entertain them or go to a good musical show once in a wile and have a wife that is in sympathy with you and not nag at you all the wile but be a real help mate. The girlie up on the Drive would run me ragged and have me in the poor house inside of a year even if I was makeing 25 grand out of one song. Besides she wears a make up that you would have to blast to find out what her face looks like. So I have not been back there and don't intend to see her again so what is the use of me telling you about her. And the only other girlie I have met is a sister of Paul Sears who I met up to his house wile we was working on the song but she don't hardly count as she has not got no use for the boys but treats them like dirt and Paul says she is the coldest proposition he ever seen.

Well I don't know no more to write and besides have got a date to go out to Paul's place for dinner and play some of my stuff for him so as he can see if he wants to set words to some more of my melodies. Well don't do nothing I would not do and have as good a time as you can in old Chi and will let you know how we come along with the song.

CHAS. F. LEWIS

Chicago, Ill., Aug. 23.

DEAR MR. MAN: I am thrilled to death over the song and think the words awfully pretty and am crazy to hear the music which I know must be great. It must be wonderful to have the gift of writing songs and then hear people play and sing them and just think of making $25,000 in such a short time. My, how rich you will be and I certainly congratulate you though am afraid when you are rich and famous you will have no time for insignificant little me or will you be an exception and remember your "old" friends even when you are up in the world? I sincerely hope so.

Will look forward to receiving a copy of the song and will you be sure and put your name on it? I am all ready very conceited just to think that I know a man that writes songs and makes all that money.

Seriously I wish you success with your next song and I laughed when I read your remark about being busier than a one armed paper hanger. I don't see how you think up all those comparisons and crazy things to say. The next time one of the girls asks me to go out with them I am going to tell them I can't go because I am busier than a one armed paper hanger and then they will think I made it up and say: "The girl is clever."

Seriously I am glad you did not go back to see the girl on the Drive and am also glad you don't like girls who makes themselves up so much as I think it is disgusting and would rather go round looking like a ghost than put artificial color on my face. Fortunately I have a complexion that does not need "fixing" but even if my coloring was not what it is I would never think of lowering myself to "fix" it. But I must tell you a joke that happened just the other day when Edith and I were out at lunch and there was another girl in the restaurant whom Edie knew and she introduced her to me and I noticed how this girl kept staring at me and finally she begged my pardon and asked if she could ask me a personal question and I said yes and she asked me if my complexion was really "mine." I

assured her it was and she said: "Well, I thought so because I did not think anybody could put it on so artistically. I certainly envy you." Edie and I both laughed.

Well, if that girl envies me my complexion, why I envy you living in New York. Chicago is rather dirty though I don't let that part of it bother me as I bathe and change my clothing so often that the dirt does not have time to "settle." Edie often says she cannot see how I always keep so clean looking and says I always look like I had just stepped out of a band box. She also calls me a fish (jokingly) because I spend so much time in the water. But seriously I do love to bathe and never feel so happy as when I have just "cleaned up" and put on fresh clothing.

Edie has just gone out to see a picture and was cross at me because I would not go with her. I told her I was going to write a letter and she wanted to know to whom and I told her and she said: "You write to him so often that a person would almost think you was in love with him." I just laughed and turned it off, but she does say the most embarrassing things and I would be angry if it was anybody but she that said them.

Seriously I had much rather sit here and write letters or read or just sit and dream than go out to some crazy old picture show except once in awhile I do like to go to the theater and see a good play and a specially a musical play if the music is catchy. But as a rule I am contented to just stay home and feel cozy and lots of evenings Edie and I sit here without saying hardly a word to each other though she would love to talk but she knows I had rather be quiet and she often says it is just like living with a deaf and dumb mute to live with me because I make so little noise round the apartment. I guess I was born to be a home body as I so seldom care to go "gadding."

Though I do love to have company once in awhile, just a few congenial friends whom I can talk to and feel at home with and play cards or have some music. My friends love to drop in here, too, as they say Edie and I always give them

such nice things to eat. Though poor Edie has not much to do with it, I am afraid, as she hates anything connected with cooking which is one of the things I love best of anything and I often say that when I begin keeping house in my own home I will insist on doing most of my own work as I would take so much more interest in it than a servant, though I would want somebody to help me a little if I could afford it as I often think a woman that does all her own work is liable to get so tired that she loses interest in the bigger things of life like books and music. Though after all what bigger thing is there than home making a specially for a woman?

I am sitting in the dearest old chair that I bought yesterday at a little store on the North Side. That is my one extravagance, buying furniture and things for the house, but I always say it is economy in the long run as I will always have them and have use for them and when I can pick them up at a bargain I would be silly not to. Though heaven knows I will never be "poor" in regards to furniture and rugs and things like that as mother's house in Toledo is full of lovely things which she says she is going to give to Sis and myself as soon as we have real homes of our own. She is going to give me the first choice as I am her favorite. She has the loveliest old things that you could not buy now for love or money including lovely old rugs and a piano which Sis wanted to have a player attachment put on it but I said it would be an insult to the piano so we did not get one. I am funny about things like that, a specially old furniture and feel towards them like people whom I love.

Poor mother, I am afraid she won't live much longer to enjoy her lovely old things as she has been suffering for years from stomach trouble and the doctor says it has been worse lately instead of better and her heart is weak besides. I am going home to see her a few days this fall as it may be the last time. She is very cheerful and always says she is ready to go now as she has had enough joy out of life and all she would like would be to see her girls settled down in their own homes before she goes.

There I go, talking about my domestic affairs again and I will bet you are bored to death though personly I am never bored when my friends tell me about themselves. But I won't "rattle on" any longer, but will say good night and don't forget to write and tell me how you come out with the song and thanks for sending me the words to it. Will you write a song about me some time? I would be thrilled to death! But I am afraid I am not the kind of girl that inspires men to write songs about them, but am just a quiet "mouse" that loves home and am not giddy enough to be the heroine of a song.

Well, Mr. Man, good night and don't wait so long before writing again to

Yours (?)

MABELLE.

N. Y., Sept. 8.

DEAR GIRLIE: Well girlie have not got your last letter with me so cannot answer what was in it as I have forgotten if there was anything I was supposed to answer and besides have only a little time to write as I have a date to go out on a party with the Sears. We are going to the Georgie White show and afterwards somewheres for supper. Sears is the boy who wrote the lyric to my song and it is him and his sister I am going on the party with. The sister is a cold fish that has no use for men but she is show crazy and insists on Paul takeing her to 3 or 4 of them a week.

Paul wants me to give up my room here and come and live with them as they have plenty of room and I am running a little low on money but don't know if I will do it or not as am afraid I would freeze to death in the same house with a girl like the sister as she is ice cold but she don't hang round the house much as she is always takeing trips or going to shows or somewheres.

So far we have not had no luck with the song. All the publishers we have showed it to has went crazy over it but they won't make the right kind of a deal with us and if they don't

loosen up and give us a decent royalty rate we are libel to put the song out ourselves and show them up. The man up to Goebel's told us the song was O.K. and he liked it but it was more of a production number than anything else and ought to go in a show like the Follies but they won't be in N.Y. much longer and what we ought to do is hold it till next spring.

Mean wile I am working on some new numbers and also have taken a position with the orchestra at the Wilton and am going to work there starting next week. They pay good money $60 and it will keep me going.

Well girlie that is about all the news. I believe you said your father was sick and hope he is better and also hope you are getting along O.K. and take care of yourself. When you have nothing else to do write to your friend,

CHAS. F. LEWIS.

Chicago, Ill., Sept. 11.

DEAR MR. LEWIS: Your short note reached me yesterday and must say I was puzzled when I read it. It sounded like you was mad at me though I cannot think of any reason why you should be. If there was something I said in my last letter that offended you I wish you would tell me what it was and I will ask your pardon though I cannot remember anything I could of said that you could take offense at. But if there was something, why I assure you, Mr. Lewis, that I did not mean anything by it. I certainly did not intend to offend you in any way.

Perhaps it is nothing I wrote you, but you are worried on account of the publishers not treating you fair in regards to your song and that is why your letter sounded so distant. If that is the case I hope that by this time matters have rectified themselves and the future looks brighter. But any way, Mr. Lewis, don't allow yourself to worry over business cares as they will all come right in the end and I always think it is silly for people to worry themselves sick over temporary troubles,

but the best way is to "keep smiling" and look for the "silver lining" in the cloud. That is the way I always do and no matter what happens, I manage to smile and my girl friend, Edie, calls me Sunny because I always look on the bright side.

Remember also, Mr. Lewis, that $60 is a salary that a great many men would like to be getting and are living on less than that and supporting a wife and family on it. I always say that a person can get along on whatever amount they make if they manage things in the right way.

So if it is business troubles, Mr. Lewis, I say don't worry, but look on the bright side. But if it is something I wrote in my last letter that offended you I wish you would tell me what it was so I can apologize as I assure you I meant nothing and would not say anything to hurt you for the world.

Please let me hear from you soon as I will not feel comfortable until I know I am not to blame for the sudden change.

Sincerely,

MABELLE GILLESPIE.

N. Y., Sept. 24.

DEAR MISS GILLESPIE: Just a few lines to tell you the big news or at least it is big news to me. I am engaged to be married to Paul Sears' sister and we are going to be married early next month and live in Atlantic City where the orchestra I have been playing with has got an engagement in one of the big cabarets.

I know this will be a surprise to you as it was even a surprise to me as I did not think I would ever have the nerve to ask the girlie the big question as she was always so cold and acted like I was just in the way. But she said she supposed she would have to marry somebody some time and she did not dislike me as much as most of the other men her brother brought round and she would marry me with the understanding that she would not have to be a slave and work round the house and also I would have to take her to a show or somewheres every night

and if I could not take her myself she would "run wild" alone. Atlantic City will be O.K. for that as a lot of new shows opens down there and she will be able to see them before they get to the big town. As for her being a slave, I would hate to think of marrying a girl and then have them spend their lives in druggery round the house. We are going to live in a hotel till we find something better but will be in no hurry to start house keeping as we will have to buy all new furniture.

Betsy is some doll when she is all fixed up and believe me she knows how to fix herself up. I don't know what she uses but it is weather proof as I have been out in a rain storm with her and we both got drowned but her face stayed on. I would almost think it was real only she tells me different.

Well girlie I may write to you again once in a wile as Betsy says she don't give a dam if I write to all the girls in the world just so I don't make her read the answers but that is all I can think of to say now except good bye and good luck and may the right man come along soon and he will be a lucky man getting a girl that is such a good cook and got all that furniture etc.

But just let me give you a word of advice before I close and that is don't never speak to strange men who you don't know nothing about as they may get you wrong and think you are trying to make them. It just happened that I knew better so you was lucky in my case but the luck might not last.

Your friend,

Chas. F. Lewis.

Chicago, Ill., Sept. 27.

My Dear Mr. Lewis: Thanks for your advice and also thank your fiance for her generosity in allowing you to continue your correspondence with her "rivals," but personly I have no desire to take advantage of that generosity as I have something better to do than read letters from a man like you, a specially as I have a man friend who is not so generous as

Miss Sears and would strongly object to my continuing a correspondence with another man. It is at his request that I am writing this note to tell you not to expect to hear from me again.

Allow me to congratulate you on your engagement to Miss Sears and I am sure she is to be congratulated too, though if I met the lady I would be tempted to ask her to tell me her secret, namely how is she going to "run wild" on $60.

Sincerely,

MABELLE GILLESPIE.

KAY BOYLE

The First Lover

FOR OVER A MONTH THE MUSIC of their conversation had been gently rocking the *pension* to sleep. Out of the window behind their three fair heads rose the rocky hills of Beausoleil, so covered with little pink villas, with porcelain cats, and china turtles that the dignity of a bare rock rearing ugly as sin between the houses was enough to make the heart stand still. The three girls themselves were out of their own country with an elation signifying that everything that tasted unpleasant had been left behind. Such beautiful meals they were given in the *pension,* such fine things to eat, and the sunshine every day as lavish as rain.

This was a vacation time for them. This was the miracle of repose their father had given them for a little while. They filled it with rich excursions, hot chocolate in the afternoon and cakes, and with such a wealth of conversation with mere acquaintances, but still it was in their faces that they could not forget. They could not forget the lean years that lay behind them and, if they were young, still they had lived long enough to remember what the years and the times had done to their father. Professor Albatross and his fiery heart had been extinguished. Their father had become an old man. It was only at certain sentimental hours now that they could write to him with open hearts in the same way that they had been accus-

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tomed to run to him to dry their tears in the hairs of his beard.

This was what they recounted with their pure faces and their continuous letter-writing, and with their conversation about other things. If the eldest girl would look out of the window and say, "*Aber* Father would certainly never have played chess after lunch on a day like this; he would have liked sitting in the casino gardens, especially now that they've changed the flowers again," this was a sign for the three of them to sit in silence after the first words of understanding had been spoken. "Father. Ah, yes. Father. *Jah.*" And the younger one would turn her handkerchief in her fingers. It was easy to see from what they said that they all loved their father very much.

When the Englishman stepped into the dining-room one day at noon, surely the first thoughts of the three German girls must have turned to Professor Albatross. Here was a man about whom their father would have nodded to them in a concert hall if he had walked into it. Such a handsome man must surely have caught Father's attention, and he would have looked from one to the other of them, beating his head and smiling as if to the sound of music.

When first he set foot in the room something sprang to life in every corner of it. The sight of this strange young man standing there made the three cradles of the German girls' voices upset. Not even an "*ach*" nor an "*aber*" to meet the occasion. "An Englishman," they exchanged among them. The fresh, the sturdy, the golden cousin-ness of all gallant England filled them with dismay.

"Oh, I say . . ." remarked the young Englishman. He had looked carefully at every little piece of the room. "I wanted a table," he said. And the old lady gave him one in a minute or two.

But while he was waiting everyone had a chance to see it: the way his hair grew up and how his elegant head turned on his neck. He held his chin high, and his eyes were as blindly blue as if they had been extinguished with a red-hot iron. All

the sun of the coast had seemingly descended upon his cranium and was dripping down over his brows. Little rays of it marched across the backs of his hands. Maybe this beauty is the toughest; it is now the purest left in the world, thought the eldest girl. For an Italian must wear a color about his neck or a ring in his ear, but this British beauty depends on nothing at all but fogs that would throttle you if they could and English rains that would not fall in any other place.

The Englishman sat down at the little table they had given him and began to crunch radishes like almonds beneath his teeth. He looked steadily out of the window into the porcelain eyes of the cats and the stony doves which ornamented the garden. It seemed as if he could not bring himself to look into the eyes of the human faces that were in the room with him. The three girls had a glance for every mouthful that passed his lips. When the fresh figs were set before him he ate them in the English way, rippling the skin back until the fig in his hands bloomed open like a flower.

There seemed to be nothing in any part of him that had survived a spectacle of pain. Surely, thought the eldest girl, he had never been beset, and if ever he had been sore in his heart for love or food, he had put that carefully aside. Everything on his plate he took for granted, even the salt in its shaker was the customary thing. He had never been touched at all, she was thinking, nor had he any idea that people sometimes had less or did without.

Everything that had ever happened to them, she would keep to herself. In her bones it would reside, and he would not know that for years they had been like mice lean for a crumb. Not a drop of his blood would ever sound the poverty of the years that ran behind them. They were in a new country of greed and plenty and they would forget, by turning their faces away, they would forget everything that had made their hearts like winter apples.

"*Lieblinge,*" said the eldest girl to her sisters, "we must do our nails and behave like princesses."

They had to drop their lids to cover the jubilation in their eyes. This was the reward they owed Professor Albatross. What a recompense to the old man if his three daughters could between them bear back to him this evidence of health and prosperity, this assurance that all was well. Whether it was the state of his flesh or something else besides that gave the Englishman his temper of wealth and empire, they did not know. But his it was, and merely the sight of it would surely be enough to revive the old man's courage.

When the Englishman had finished eating he dabbed at his mouth with his napkin and then placed it in a little heap by the side of his plate. He had not tied it into a bowknot, as others had done, or made it into a butterfly. He had eaten well, but with such dispatch. He walked out of the dining-room with his own standard set relentlessly upon him. He would recognize nothing short of health and austerity. Whatever he stood for had a name, and he would accept nothing less.

He walked directly out into the back garden after lunch, and from their window the three German girls could see him. They stood in their bedroom, behind the folds of the curtains, and relished the rosy backs of his ears and his narrow wrists crossed behind him as he walked. Suddenly he swung about and sat down in a wicker chair, and they started back from the window in fright. But his clear gaze and his short straight nose were pointing off towards Monte Carlo. Surely he did not even know the three girls were there.

A strange sort of defiance for one another was in their eyes, and the eldest knew that it was she herself who must say what was to be said. She turned from the window and picked up her embroidery hoop and its veil of work from the table. The prosperity of this cloth with a fresh skein of white silk to it was equally as far from anything they had ever known. They had

never before had time for embroidery until they had come to this affluent land. Beyond the window they could see the Englishman with an ivory part running through his hair. He was reading the London *Times* in the sun, with his legs stretched out before him and his ankles in gray socks crossed like a silver chain. Suddenly the eldest girl ran to her sisters to hide her eyes and her blushes in the soft turn of their shoulders.

"He looks so *well!*" she whispered, and the wind of her breath in their necks made them shriek softly with laughter. "As if he had never been hungry!"

She was laughing, too, but her eyes were crying. She stood before them, laughing, with her small hands covering her face.

He must have seen so many beautiful clothes, she was thinking. There was nothing she could wear that would catch his attention at all. She stood in the room with her two sisters, thinking of how she would speak to him. Not at dinner, for there would be too many people at the tables, but when he would perhaps walk out into the garden after having eaten, and she would throw a little scarf over her shoulders and follow him. In her mind she could hear the sound of her own tentative "*bitte, bitte,*" following in his wake. But however she thought of him she could not forget the forbidding set of his jaw when he bit into his bread.

She would make up some kind of a fine story about their lives, which had remained at home while surely he was traveling everywhere. "Your countrymen and you, you are forever traveling for beauty," was one of the things that she would say. She would talk of her father—Baron Albatross; *jah,* why not a baron?—and of the idleness and poetry that had nourished them. With all of Germany suffering in one way or another, she would say to him, it was strange but true that they had never known any suffering at all. It was her father's high position that had protected them. She would say it so many times, over and over, that she would make it true.

"Do you ever come to Munich?" she would ask him.

By the time he came to Munich, she was thinking, by that time he would be in love. By that time his heart would be winged like an archangel, and he would not care if she were rich or poor. And if there were a moment of silence in the garden after dinner, or a pause of any kind between all the things they had to say, she would go on, "My two little sisters are with me. . . ." Suddenly she kissed their faces.

"Oh, don't even mention us to him!" they whispered. "He is to be for you. He is to be your lover. We want him to be yours."

She was thinking that she must carry herself like a rich lady, and that any plaintiveness at all must be kept out of her voice. No prithee, do, please, pray. No insomuch as, but "Indeed, you *must* visit our prosperous city. . . ." "If only I could wear four pairs of earrings at once," she was thinking. She looked at her wan face in the glass.

"I must smile," she said.

She crossed the room to the window to see if he were still sitting in the sun. The newspaper had dropped from his fingers and he was there, reflecting, dreaming, and pondering, deeply meditating. She wondered what dreams were in his head. And then suddenly the Englishman turned and looked up into her face.

If a blush had sought to shame him for his impertinence, it perished in the relentless pride of his race. He lifted one hand to shade his eyes, and then he got to his feet. The German girl was clinging, half-swooning, to the window frame.

The Englishman cleared his throat.

"You're not by any chance . . ." he said, talking up from the garden, "I mean to say, I saw your names on the register a while ago. . . . I dare say yours. Are you by any chance daughters of Professor Albatross of Munich? I must have studied with your father—physics—at least, if he is."

"Yes," said the German girl.

Her voice could scarcely be heard. Her finger-nails had turned white upon the sill.

"Yes," she said.

Her face was so contorted that her sisters scarcely knew her.

"Professor Albatross," she whispered out of the window. "Yes."

The two sisters saw her face hanging in anguish at the window. They themselves were too stricken to summon a word of response. She was standing with her mouth hanging open. She could not make another sound.

"Fancy running into you here," said the Englishman.

Behind her hung the deathly silence—*grosse Seelen dulden still*—with now and again the whisper of her sisters' breathing like the flight of a mouse across the room. The Englishman was standing with one hand in his pocket, and the other lifted to shade his eyes.

"Fancy," he said. With this he gave a little nod of his head.

"I just stopped off for lunch here," he said.

He smiled up at the German girl in the window, and with this he walked into the house, leaving the three sisters to one another. They turned around upon one another in some kind of fury that had never possessed them before. Their eyes were warm, and their teeth were strung like pearls across their faces. They had so much to say to one another that they didn't know where to begin.

SAKI (H. H. MUNRO)

Gabriel-Ernest

"THERE IS A WILD BEAST IN YOUR woods," said the artist Cunningham, as he was being driven to the station. It was the only remark he had made during the drive, but as Van Cheele had talked incessantly his companion's silence had not been noticeable.

"A stray fox or two and some resident weasels. Nothing more formidable," said Van Cheele. The artist said nothing.

"What did you mean about a wild beast?" said Van Cheele later, when they were on the platform.

"Nothing. My imagination. Here is the train," said Cunningham.

That afternoon Van Cheele went for one of his frequent rambles through his woodland property. He had a stuffed bittern in his study, and knew the names of quite a number of wild flowers, so his aunt had possibly some justification in describing him as a great naturalist. At any rate, he was a great walker. It was his custom to take mental notes of everything he saw during his walks, not so much for the purpose of assisting contemporary science as to provide topics for conversation afterwards. When the blue-bells began to show themselves in flower he made a point of informing every one of the fact; the season of the year might have warned his hearers of the likeli-

From *The Short Stories of Saki* (H. H. Munro). Copyright, 1930, by The Viking Press, Inc., New York.

hood of such an occurrence, but at least they felt that he was being absolutely frank with them.

What Van Cheele saw on this particular afternoon was, however, something far removed from his ordinary range of experience. On a shelf of smooth stone overhanging a deep pool in the hollow of an oak coppice a boy of about sixteen lay asprawl, drying his wet brown limbs luxuriously in the sun. His wet hair, parted by a recent dive, lay close to his head, and his light-brown eyes, so light that there was an almost tigerish gleam in them, were turned towards Van Cheele with a certain lazy watchfulness. It was an unexpected apparition, and Van Cheele found himself engaged in the novel process of thinking before he spoke. Where on earth could this wild-looking boy hail from? The miller's wife had lost a child some two months ago, supposed to have been swept away by the mill-race, but that had been a mere baby, not a half-grown lad.

"What are you doing there?" he demanded.

"Obviously, sunning myself," replied the boy.

"Where do you live?"

"Here, in these woods."

"You can't live in the woods," said Van Cheele.

"They are very nice woods," said the boy, with a touch of patronage in his voice.

"But where do you sleep at night?"

"I don't sleep at night; that's my busiest time."

Van Cheele began to have an irritated feeling that he was grappling with a problem that was eluding him.

"What do you feed on?" he asked.

"Flesh," said the boy, and he pronounced the word with slow relish, as though he were tasting it.

"Flesh! What flesh?"

"Since it interests you, rabbits, wild-fowl, hares, poultry, lambs in their season, children when I can get any; they're usually too well locked in at night, when I do most of my hunting. It's quite two months since I tasted child-flesh."

Ignoring the chaffing nature of the last remark Van Cheele tried to draw the boy on the subject of possible poaching operations.

"You're talking rather through your hat when you speak of feeding on hares." (Considering the nature of the boy's toilet the simile was hardly an apt one.) "Our hillside hares aren't easily caught."

"At night I hunt on four feet," was the somewhat cryptic response.

"I suppose you mean that you hunt with a dog?" hazarded Van Cheele.

The boy rolled slowly over on to his back, and laughed a weird low laugh, that was pleasantly like a chuckle and disagreeably like a snarl.

"I don't fancy any dog would be very anxious for my company, especially at night."

Van Cheele began to feel that there was something positively uncanny about the strange-eyed, strange-tongued youngster.

"I can't have you staying in these woods," he declared authoritatively.

"I fancy you'd rather have me here than in your house," said the boy.

The prospect of this wild, nude animal in Van Cheele's primly ordered house was certainly an alarming one.

"If you don't go I shall have to make you," said Van Cheele.

The boy turned like a flash, plunged into the pool, and in a moment had flung his wet and glistening body half-way up the bank where Van Cheele was standing. In an otter the movement would not have been remarkable; in a boy Van Cheele found it sufficiently startling. His foot slipped as he made an involuntary backward movement, and he found himself almost prostrate on the slippery weed-grown bank, with those tigerish yellow eyes not very far from his own. Almost instinctively he half raised his hand to his throat. The boy

laughed again, a laugh in which the snarl had nearly driven out the chuckle, and then, with another of his astonishing lightning movements, plunged out of view into a yielding tangle of weed and fern.

"What an extraordinary wild animal!" said Van Cheele as he picked himself up. And then he recalled Cunningham's remark, "There is a wild beast in your woods."

Walking slowly homeward, Van Cheele began to turn over in his mind various local occurrences which might be traceable to the existence of this astonishing young savage.

Something had been thinning the game in the woods lately, poultry had been missing from the farms, hares were growing unaccountably scarcer, and complaints had reached him of lambs being carried off bodily from the hills. Was it possible that this wild boy was really hunting the country-side in company with some clever poacher dog? He had spoken of hunting "four-footed" by night, but then, again, he had hinted strangely at no dog caring to come near him, "especially at night." It was certainly puzzling. And then, as Van Cheele ran his mind over the various depredations that had been committed during the last month or two, he came suddenly to a dead stop, alike in his walk and his speculations. The child missing from the mill two months ago—the accepted theory was that it had tumbled into the mill-race and been swept away; but the mother had always declared she had heard a shriek on the hill side of the house, in the opposite direction from the water. It was unthinkable, of course, but he wished that the boy had not made that uncanny remark about child-flesh eaten two months ago. Such dreadful things should not be said even in fun.

Van Cheele, contrary to his usual wont, did not feel disposed to be communicative about his discovery in the wood. His position as a parish councillor and justice of the peace seemed somehow compromised by the fact that he was harbouring a personality of such doubtful repute on his property; there was even a possibility that a heavy bill of damages for raided lambs

and poultry might be laid at his door. At dinner that night he was quite unusually silent.

"Where's your voice gone to?" said his aunt. "One would think you had seen a wolf."

Van Cheele, who was not familiar with the old saying, thought the remark rather foolish; if he *had* seen a wolf on his property his tongue would have been extraordinarily busy with the subject.

At breakfast next morning Van Cheele was conscious that his feeling of uneasiness regarding yesterday's episode had not wholly disappeared, and he resolved to go by train to the neighbouring cathedral town, hunt up Cunningham, and learn from him what he had really seen that had prompted his remark about a wild beast in the woods. With this resolution taken, his usual cheerfulness partially returned, and he hummed a bright little melody as he sauntered to the morning-room for his customary cigarette. As he entered the room the melody made way abruptly for a pious invocation. Gracefully asprawl on the ottoman, in an attitude of almost exaggerated repose, was the boy of the woods. He was drier than when Van Cheele had last seen him, but no other alteration was noticeable in his toilet.

"How dare you come here?" asked Van Cheele furiously.

"You told me I was not to stay in the woods," said the boy calmly.

"But not to come here. Supposing my aunt should see you!"

And with a view to minimising that catastrophe Van Cheele hastily obscured as much of his unwelcome guest as possible under the folds of a *Morning Post*. At that moment his aunt entered the room.

"This is a poor boy who has lost his way—and lost his memory. He doesn't know who he is or where he comes from," explained Van Cheele desperately, glancing apprehensively at the waif's face to see whether he was going to add inconvenient candour to his other savage propensities.

Miss Van Cheele was enormously interested.

"Perhaps his underlinen is marked," she suggested.

"He seems to have lost most of that, too," said Van Cheele, making frantic little grabs at the *Morning Post* to keep it in its place.

A naked homeless child appealed to Miss Van Cheele as warmly as a stray kitten or derelict puppy would have done.

"We must do all we can for him," she decided, and in a very short time a messenger, dispatched to the rectory, where a page-boy was kept, had returned with a suit of pantry clothes, and the necessary accessories of shirt, shoes, collar, etc. Clothed, clean, and groomed, the boy lost none of his uncanniness in Van Cheele's eyes, but his aunt found him sweet.

"We must call him something till we know who he really is," she said. "Gabriel-Ernest, I think; those are nice suitable names."

Van Cheele agreed, but he privately doubted whether they were being grafted on to a nice suitable child. His misgivings were not diminished by the fact that his staid and elderly spaniel had bolted out of the house at the first incoming of the boy, and now obstinately remained shivering and yapping at the farther end of the orchard, while the canary, usually as vocally industrious as Van Cheele himself, had put itself on an allowance of frightened cheeps. More than ever he was resolved to consult Cunningham without loss of time.

As he drove off to the station his aunt was arranging that Gabriel-Ernest should help her to entertain the infant members of her Sunday-school class at tea that afternoon.

Cunningham was not at first disposed to be communicative.

"My mother died of some brain trouble," he explained, "so you will understand why I am averse to dwelling on anything of an impossibly fantastic nature that I may see or think that I have seen."

"But what *did* you see?" persisted Van Cheele.

"What I thought I saw was something so extraordinary that

no really sane man could dignify it with the credit of having actually happened. I was standing, the last evening I was with you, half-hidden in the hedgegrowth by the orchard gate, watching the dying glow of the sunset. Suddenly I became aware of a naked boy, a bather from some neighbouring pool, I took him to be, who was standing out on the bare hillside also watching the sunset. His pose was so suggestive of some wild faun of Pagan myth that I instantly wanted to engage him as a model, and in another moment I think I should have hailed him. But just then the sun dipped out of view, and all the orange and pink slid out of the landscape, leaving it cold and grey. And at the same moment an astounding thing happened —the boy vanished too!"

"What! Vanished away into nothing?" asked Van Cheele excitedly.

"No; that is the dreadful part of it," answered the artist; "on the open hillside where the boy had been standing a second ago, stood a large wolf, blackish in colour, with gleaming fangs and cruel, yellow eyes. You may think—"

But Van Cheele did not stop for anything as futile as thought. Already he was tearing at top speed towards the station. He dismissed the idea of a telegram. "Gabriel-Ernest is a werewolf" was a hopelessly inadequate effort at conveying the situation, and his aunt would think it was a code message to which he had omitted to give her the key. His one hope was that he might reach home before sundown. The cab which he chartered at the other end of the railway journey bore him with what seemed exasperating slowness along the country roads, which were pink and mauve with the flush of the sinking sun. His aunt was putting away some unfinished jams and cake when he arrived.

"Where is Gabriel-Ernest?" he almost screamed.

"He is taking the little Toop child home," said his aunt. "It was getting so late, I thought it wasn't safe to let it go back alone. What a lovely sunset, isn't it?"

But Van Cheele, although not oblivious of the glow in the western sky, did not stay to discuss its beauties. At a speed for which he was scarcely geared he raced along the narrow lane that led to the home of the Toops. On one side ran the swift current of the mill-stream, on the other rose the stretch of bare hillside. A dwindling rim of red sun showed still on the skyline, and the next turning must bring him in view of the ill-assorted couple he was pursuing. Then the colour went suddenly out of things, and a grey light settled itself with a quick shiver over the landscape. Van Cheele heard a shrill wail of fear, and stopped running.

Nothing was ever seen again of the Toop child or Gabriel-Ernest, but the latter's discarded garments were found lying in the road, so it was assumed that the child had fallen into the water, and that the boy had stripped and jumped in, in a vain endeavour to save it. Van Cheele and some workmen who were near by at the time testified to having heard a child scream loudly just near the spot where the clothes were found. Mrs. Toop, who had eleven other children, was decently resigned to her bereavement, but Miss Van Cheele sincerely mourned her lost foundling. It was on her initiative that a memorial brass was put up in the parish church to "Gabriel-Ernest, an unknown boy, who bravely sacrificed his life for another."

Van Cheele gave way to his aunt in most things, but he flatly refused to subscribe to the Gabriel-Ernest memorial.

A. E. COPPARD

Arabesque: The Mouse

In the main street amongst tall establishments of mart and worship was a high narrow house pressed between a coffee factory and a bootmaker's. It had four flights of long dim echoing stairs, and at the top, in a room that was full of the smell of dried apples and mice, a man in the middle age of life had sat reading Russian novels until he thought he was mad. Late was the hour, the night outside black and freezing, the pavements below empty and undistinguishable when he closed his book and sat motionless in front of the glowing but flameless fire. He felt he was very tired, yet he could not rest. He stared at a picture on the wall until he wanted to cry; it was a colour-print by Utamaro of a suckling child caressing its mother's breasts as she sits in front of a blackbound mirror. Very chaste and decorative it was, in spite of its curious anatomy. The man gazed, empty of sight though not of mind, until the sighing of the gas-jet maddened him. He got up, put out the light, and sat down in the darkness trying to compose his mind before the comfort of the fire. And he was just about to begin a conversation with himself when a mouse crept from a hole in the skirting near the fireplace and scurried into the fender. The man had the crude dislike for such sly nocturnal things, but this mouse was so small and

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bright, its antics so pretty, that he drew his feet carefully from the fender and sat watching it almost with amusement. The mouse moved along the shadows of the fender, out upon the hearth, and sat before the glow, rubbing its head, ears, and tiny belly with its paws as if it were bathing itself with the warmth, until, sharp and sudden, the fire sank, an ember fell, and the mouse flashed into its hole.

The man reached forward to the mantelpiece and put his hand upon a pocket lamp. Turning on the beam, he opened the door of a cupboard beside the fireplace. Upon one of the shelves there was a small trap baited with cheese, a trap made with a wire spring, one of those that smashed down to break the back of ingenuous and unwary mice.

"Mean—so mean," he mused, "to appeal to the hunger of any living thing just in order to destroy it."

He picked up the empty trap as if to throw it in the fire.

"I suppose I had better leave it though—the place swarms with them." He still hesitated. "I hope that little beastie won't go and do anything foolish." He put the trap back quite carefully, closed the door of the cupboard, sat down again and extinguished the lamp.

Was there anyone else in the world so squeamish and foolish about such things! Even his mother, mother so bright and beautiful, even she had laughed at his childish horrors. He recalled how once in his childhood, not long after his sister Yosine was born, a friendly neighbour had sent him home with a bundle of dead larks tied by the feet "for supper." The pitiful inanimity of the birds had brought a gush of tears; he had run weeping home and into the kitchen, and there he had found the strange thing doing. It was dusk; mother was kneeling before the fire. He dropped the larks.

"Mother!" he exclaimed softly.

She looked at his tearful face.

"What's the matter, Filip?" she asked, smiling too at his astonishment.

"Mother! What are you doing?"

Her bodice was open and she was squeezing her breasts; long thin streams of milk spurted into the fire with a plunging noise.

"Weaning your little sister," laughed mother. She took his inquisitive face and pressed it against the delicate warmth of her bosom, and he forgot the dead birds behind him.

"Let me do it, mother," he cried, and doing so he discovered the throb of the heart in his mother's breast. Wonderful it was for him to experience it, although she could not explain it to him.

"Why does it do that?"

"If it did not beat, little son, I should die and the Holy Father would take me from you."

"God?"

She nodded. He put his hand upon his own breast. "Oh, feel it, Mother!" he cried. Mother unbuttoned his little coat and felt the gentle *tick tick* with her warm palm.

"Beautiful!" she said.

"Is it a good one?"

She kissed his smiling lips. "It is good if it beats truly. Let it always beat truly, Filip; let it always beat truly."

There was the echo of a sigh in her voice, and he had divined some grief, for he was very wise. He kissed her bosom in his tiny ecstasy and whispered soothingly: "Little mother! little mother!" In such joys he forgot his horror of the dead larks; indeed he helped mother to pluck them and spit them for supper.

It was a black day that succeeded, and full of tragedy for the child. A great bay horse with a tawny mane had knocked down his mother in the lane, and a heavy cart had passed over her, crushing both her hands. She was borne away moaning with anguish to the surgeon who cut off the two hands. She died in the night. For years the child's dreams were filled with the horror of the stumps of arms, bleeding unendingly. Yet

he had never seen them, for he was sleeping when she died.

While this old woe was come vividly before him he again became aware of the mouse. His nerves stretched upon him in repulsion, but he soon relaxed to a tolerant interest, for it was really a most engaging little mouse. It moved with curious staccato scurries, stopping to rub its head or flicker with its ears; they seemed almost transparent ears. It spied a red cinder and skipped innocently up to it . . . sniffing . . . sniffing . . . until it jumped back scorched. It would crouch as a cat does, blinking in the warmth, or scamper madly as if dancing, and then roll upon its side rubbing its head with those pliant paws. The melancholy man watched it until it came at last to rest and squatted meditatively upon its haunches, hunched up, looking curiously wise, a pennyworth of philosophy; then once more the coals sank with a rattle and again the mouse was gone.

The man sat on before the fire and his mind filled again with unaccountable sadness. He had grown into manhood with a burning generosity of spirit and rifts of rebellion in him that proved too exacting for his fellows and seemed mere wantonness to men of casual rectitudes. "Justice and Sin," he would cry, "Property and Virtue—incompatibilities! There can be no sin in a world of justice, no property in a world of virtue!" With an engaging extravagance and a certain clear-eyed honesty of mind he had put his two and two together and seemed then to rejoice, as in some topsy-turvy dream, in having rendered unto Cæsar, as you might say, the things that were due to Napoleon! But this kind of thing could not pass unexpiated in a world of men having an infinite regard for Property and a pride in their traditions of Virtue and Justice. They could indeed forgive him his sins, but they could not forgive him his compassions. So he had to go seek for more melodious-minded men and fair unambiguous women. But rebuffs can deal more deadly blows than daggers; he became timid—a timidity not of fear but of pride—and grew with the years into misan-

thropy, susceptible to trivial griefs and despairs, a vessel of emotion that emptied as easily as it filled, until he came at last to know that his griefs were half deliberate, his despairs half unreal, and to live but for beauty—which is tranquillity—to put her wooing hand upon him.

Now, while the mouse hunts in the cupboard, one fair recollection stirs in the man's mind—of Cassia and the harmony of their only meeting, Cassia who had such rich red hair, and eyes, yes, her eyes were full of starry inquiry like the eyes of mice. It was so long ago that he had forgotten how he came to be in it, that unaccustomed orbit of vain vivid things—a village festival, all oranges and houp-la. He could not remember how he came to be there, but at night, in the court hall, he had danced with Cassia—fair and unambiguous indeed!—who had come like the wind from among the roses and swept into his heart.

"It is easy to guess," he had said to her, "what you like most in the world."

She laughed. "To dance? Yes, and you . . . ?"

"To find a friend."

"I know, I know," she cried, caressing him with recognitions. "Ah, at times I quite love my friends—until I begin to wonder how much they hate me!"

He had loved at once that cool pale face, the abundance of her strange hair as light as the autumn's clustered bronze, her lilac dress and all the sweetness about her like a bush of lilies. How they had laughed at the two old peasants whom they had overheard gabbling of trifles like sickness and appetite!

"There's a lot of nature in a parsnip," said one, a fat person of the kind that swells grossly when stung by a bee, "a lot of nature when it's young, but when it's old it's like everything else."

"True it is."

"And I'm very fond of vegetables, yes, and I'm very fond of bread."

"Come out with me," whispered Cassia to Filip, and they walked out in the blackness of midnight into what must have been a garden.

"Cool it is here," she said, "and quiet, but too dark even to see your face—can you see mine?"

"The moon will not rise until after dawn," said he, "it will be white in the sky when the starlings whistle in your chimney."

They walked silently and warily about until they felt the chill of the air. A dull echo of the music came to them through the walls, then stopped, and they heard the bark of a fox away in the woods.

"You are cold," he whispered, touching her bare neck with timid fingers. "Quite, quite cold," drawing his hand tenderly over the curves of her chin and face. "Let us go in," he said, moving with discretion from the rapture he desired. "We will come out again," said Cassia.

But within the room the ball was just at an end, the musicians were packing up their instruments and the dancers were flocking out and homewards, or to the buffet which was on a platform at one end of the room. The two old peasants were there, munching hugely.

"I tell you," said one of them, "there's nothing in the world for it but the grease of an owl's liver. That's it, that's it! Take something on your stomach now, just to offset the chill of the dawn!"

Filip and Cassia were beside them, but there were so many people crowding the platform that Filip had to jump down. He stood then looking up adoringly at Cassia, who had pulled a purple cloak around her.

"For Filip, Filip, Filip," she said, pushing the last bite of her sandwich into his mouth, and pressing upon him her glass of Loupiac. Quickly he drank it with a great gesture, and, flinging the glass to the wall, took Cassia into his arms, shout-

ing: "I'll carry you home, the whole way home, yes, I'll carry you!"

"Put me down!" she cried, beating his head and pulling his ear, as they passed among the departing dancers. "Put me down, you wild thing!"

Dark, dark was the lane outside, and the night an obsidian net, into which he walked carrying the girl. But her arms were looped around him; she discovered paths for him, clinging more tightly as he staggered against a wall, stumbled upon a gulley, or when her sweet hair was caught in the boughs of a little lime tree.

"Do not loose me, Filip, will you? Do not loose me," Cassia said, putting her lips against his temple.

His brain seemed bursting, his heart rocked within him, but he adored the rich grace of her limbs against his breast. "Here it is," she murmured, and he carried her into a path that led to her home in a little lawned garden where the smell of ripe apples upon the branches and the heavy lustre of roses stole upon the air. Roses and apples! Roses and apples! He carried her right into the porch before she slid down and stood close to him with her hands still upon his shoulders. He could breathe happily at the release, standing silent and looking round at the sky sprayed with wondrous stars but without a moon.

"You are stronger than I thought you, stronger than you look; you are really very strong," she whispered, nodding her head to him. Opening the buttons of his coat, she put her palm against his breast.

"Oh, how your heart does beat! Does it beat truly—and for whom?"

He had seized her wrists in a little fury of love, crying: "Little mother, little mother!"

"What are you saying?" asked the girl; but before he could continue there came a footstep sounding behind the door, and the clack of a bolt. . . .

What was that? Was that really a bolt or was it . . . was it . . . the snap of the trap? The man sat up in his room intently listening, with nerves quivering again, waiting for the trap to kill the little philosopher. When he felt it was all over he reached guardedly in the darkness for the lantern, turned on the beam, and opened the door of the cupboard. Focussing the light upon the trap, he was amazed to see the mouse sitting on its haunches before it, uncaught. Its head was bowed, but its bead-like eyes were full of brightness, and it sat blinking, it did not flee.

"Shoosh!" said the man, but the mouse did not move. "Why doesn't it go? Shoosh!" he said again, and suddenly the reason of the mouse's strange behavior was made clear. The trap had not caught it completely, but it had broken off both its forefeet, and the thing crouched there holding out its two bleeding stumps humanly, too stricken to stir.

Horror flooded the man, and conquering his repugnance he plucked the mouse up quickly by the neck. Immediately the little thing fastened its teeth in his finger; the touch was no more than the slight prick of a pin. The man's impulse then exhausted itself. What should he do with it? He put his hand behind him, he dared not look, but there was nothing to be done except to kill it at once, quickly, quickly. Oh, how should he do it? He bent towards the fire as if to drop the mouse into its quenching glow; but he paused and shuddered, he would hear its cries, he would have to listen. Should he crush it with finger and thumb? A glance towards the window decided him. He opened the sash with one hand and flung the wounded mouse far into the dark street. Closing the window with a crash, he sank into a chair, limp with pity too deep for tears.

So he sat for two minutes, five minutes, ten minutes. Anxiety and shame filled him with heat. He opened the window again, and the freezing air poured in and cooled him. Seizing his lantern, he ran down the echoing stairs, into the dark empty street, searching long and vainly for the little philosopher until

he had to desist and return to his room, shivering, frozen to his very bones.

When he had recovered some warmth he took the trap from its shelf. The two feet dropped into his hand; he cast them into the fire. Then he once more set the trap and put it back carefully into the cupboard.

STELLA BENSON

The Man Who Missed the Bus

»»Mr. Robinson's temper was quite sore by the time he reached St. Pierre. The two irritations that most surely found the weak places in his nervous defenses were noise and light in his eyes. And, as he told Monsieur Dupont, the proprietor of Les Trois Moineaux at St. Pierre, "If there is one thing, monsieur, that is offensive—essentially offensive—that is to say, a danger in itself—I mean to say noise doesn't have to have a meaning. . . . What I mean is, monsieur, that noise—"

"*Numéro trente,*" said Monsieur Dupont to the chasseur.

Mr. Robinson always had to explain things very thoroughly in order to make people really appreciate the force of what he had to say; and even then it was a hard task to get them to acknowledge receipt, so to speak, of his message. But he was a humble man, and he accounted for the atmosphere of unanswered and unfinished remarks in which he lived by admitting that his words were unfortunately always inadequate to convey to a fellow-mortal the intense interest to be found in the curiosities of behavior and sensation. His mind was overstocked with by-products of the business of life. He felt that every moment disclosed a new thing worth thinking of among

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the phenomena that his senses presented to him. Other people, he saw, let these phenomenal moments slip by unanalyzed; but if he had had the words and the courage, he felt, he could have awakened those of his fellow-creatures whom he met from their trance of shallow living. As it was, the relation of his explorations and wonderings sounded, even to his own ears, flat as the telling at breakfast of an ecstatic dream.

What he had meant to say about noise, for instance, had been that noise was *in itself* terrifying and horrible—not as a warning of danger but as a physical assault. Vulgar people treat noise only as a language that *means* something, he would have said, but really noise could not be translated, any more than rape could be translated. There was no such thing as an ugly harmless noise. The noise of an express train approaching and shrieking through a quiet station; the noise of heavy rain sweeping towards one through a forest; the noise of loud concerted laughter at an unheard joke—all benevolent noises if translated into concrete terms, were *in themselves* calamities. All this Mr. Robinson would have thought worth saying to Monsieur Dupont—worth continuing to say until Monsieur Dupont should have confessed to an understanding of his meaning; but as usual the words collapsed as soon as they left Mr. Robinson's lips.

Monsieur Dupont stood in the doorway of Les Trois Moineaux with his back to the light. Mr. Robinson could see the shape of his head set on stooping shoulders, with a little frail fluff of hair beaming round a baldness. He could see the rather crumpled ears with outleaning lobes bulging sharply against the light. But between ear and ear, between bald brow and breast he could see nothing but a black blank against the glare. Mr. Robinson had extremely acute sight—perhaps too acute, as he often wanted to tell people, since this was perhaps why the light in his eyes affected him so painfully.

"If my sight were less acute," he would have said, "I should not mind a glare so much—I mean to say, my eyes are so ex-

tremely receptive that they receive too much, or in other words the same cause that makes my eyes so very sensitive is . . ."

But nobody ever leaned forward eagerly and said, "I understand you perfectly, Mr. Robinson, and what you say is most interesting. Your sight includes so much that it cannot exclude excessive light, and this very naturally irritates your nerves, though the same peculiarity accounts for your intense powers of observation." Nobody ever said anything like that, but then, people are so self-engrossed.

Mr. Robinson was not self-engrossed—he was simply extravagantly interested in *things*, not people. For instance, he looked round now, as the chasseur sought in the shadows for his suitcase, and saw the terrace striped by long beams of light —broad flat beams that were strung like yellow sheets from every window and door in the hotel to the trees, tall urns, and tables of the terrace. A murmur of voices enlivened the air, but there were no human creatures in any beam—only blocked dark figures in the shadows—and, in every patch of light, a sleeping dog or cat or two. Dogs and cats lay extended or curled comfortably on the warm uneven paving stones, and Mr. Robinson's perfect sight absorbed the shape of every brown, tortoise-shell, or black marking on their bodies, as a geographer might accept the continents on a new unheard-of globe.

"It's just like geography—the markings on animals," Mr. Robinson had once said to an American who couldn't get away. "What I mean to say is that the markings on a dog or a rabbit have just as much sense as the markings on this world of ours —or in other words the archipelagoes of spots on this pointer puppy are just as importantly isolated from one another as they could be in any Adriatic sea."

But the American had only replied, "Why no, Mr. Robinson, not half so important; I am taking my wife, with the aid of the American Express Company, to visit the Greek islands this summer; and we shall be sick on the sea and robbed on the

land—whereas nobody but a flea ever visits the spots on that puppy, and the flea don't know and don't care a damn what color he bites into." Showing that nobody except Mr. Robinson ever really studied things impersonally.

Mr. Robinson, a very ingenious-minded and sensitive man with plenty of money, was always seeking new places to go to, where he might be a success—or rather, where his unaccountable failures elsewhere might not be known. St. Pierre, he thought, was an excellent venture, although the approach to it had been so trying. As soon as he had heard of it—through reading a short thoughtless sketch by a popular novelist in the *Daily Call*—he had felt hopeful about it. A little Provençal walled town on a hill, looking out over vineyards to the blue Mediterranean; a perfect little hotel—clean and with a wonderful cook—frequented by an interesting few. . . .

"By the time I get downstairs," thought Mr. Robinson as he carefully laid his trousers under the mattress in his room and donned another pair, "the lights will be lighted on the terrace, and I shall be able to see my future friends. I must tell someone about that curious broken reflection in the river Rhone."

He went downstairs and out onto the terrace, where the tinkle of glasses and plates made him feel hungry. He could hear, as he stood in the doorway looking out, one man's voice making a series of jokes in quick succession, each excited pause in his voice being filled by a gust and scrape of general laughter—like waves breaking on a beach with a clatter and then recoiling with a thin, hopeful, lonely sound. "Probably all his jokes are personalities," thought Mr. Robinson, "and, therefore, not essentially funny. No doubt they are slightly pornographic, at that. When will people learn how interesting and exciting *things* are? . . ."

A waiter behind him drew out a chair from a table in one of the squares of light thrown from a window. Mr. Robinson, after sitting down abstractedly, was just going to call the waiter back to tell him that his eyes were ultra-sensitive to

light and that he could see nothing in that glare, when a large dog, with the bleached, patched, innocent face of a circus clown, came and laid its head on his knee. Mr. Robinson could never bear to disappoint an animal. He attributed to animals all the hot and cold variations of feeling that he himself habitually experienced, identifying the complacent fur of the brute with his own thin human skin. So that when the waiter, coming quietly behind him, put the wine list into his hand, Mr. Robinson merely said, "Thank you, garçon, but I never touch alcohol in any form—or, for the matter of that, tobacco either. In my opinion—"and did not call the rapidly escaping waiter back to ask him to move his table. The dog's chin was now comfortably pressed against his knee, and the dog's paw hooked in a pathetically prehensile way about his ankle.

Mr. Robinson made the best of his position in the dazzle and tried to look about him. The Trois Moineaux was built just outside the encircling wall of the tightly corseted little town of St. Pierre and, since St. Pierre clung to the apex of a conical hill, it followed that the inn terrace jutted boldly out over a steep, stepped fall of vineyards overhanging the plain. The plain was very dim now, overlaid by starlit darkness, yet at the edge of the terrace there was a sense of *view*, and all the occupied tables stood in a row against the low wall, diluting the food and drink they bore with starlight and space. The men and women sitting at these tables all had their faces to the world and their backs to Mr. Robinson. He could not see a single human face. He had come down too late to secure one of the outlooking tables, and his place was imprisoned in a web of light under an olive tree. In the middle of the table, peaches and green grapes were heaped on a one-legged dish. And on the edge of the dish a caterpillar waved five-sixths of its length drearily in the air, unable to believe that its world could really end at this abrupt slippery rim. Mr. Robinson, shading his eyes from the light, could see every detail of the caterpillar's figure, and it seemed to him worth many minutes

of absorbed attention. Its color was a pale greenish-fawn, and it had two dark bumps on its brow by way of eyes.

"How unbearably difficult and lonely its life would seem to us," thought Mr. Robinson, leaning intensely over it. "How frightful if by mistake the merest spark of self-consciousness should get into an insect's body (an accidental short-circuit in the life current, perhaps), and it should know itself absolutely alone—appallingly free." He put his finger in the range of its persistent wavings and watched it crawl with a looping haste down his fingernail, accepting without question a quite fortuitous salvation from its dilemma. He laid his finger against a leaf, and the caterpillar disembarked briskly after its journey across alien elements. When it was gone, Mr. Robinson looked about him, dazed. "My goodness," he thought, "that caterpillar's face is the only one I have seen tonight!"

The noise of chatter and laughter went up like a kind of smoke from the flickering creatures at the tables near the edge of the terrace. At each table the heads and shoulders of men and women leaned together—were sucked together like flames in a common upward draft. "My dear, she looked like a . . . Oh, well, if you want to. . . . He's the kind of man who . . . *No,* my dear, not in my *bedroom.* . . . A rattling good yarn. . . . Stop me if I've told you this one before. . . ." One man, standing up a little unsteadily facing the table nearest to Mr. Robinson, made a speech: ". . . the last time . . . delightful company . . . fair sex . . . happiest hours of my life . . . mustn't waste your time . . . us mere men . . . as the Irishman said to the Scotchman when . . . happiest moments of all my life . . . one minute and I shall be done . . . always remember the happiest days of all my . . . well, I mustn't keep you . . . I heard a little story the other day. . . ." And all the time his audience leaned together round their table, embarrassed, looking away over the dark plain or murmuring together with bent heads.

The only woman whose face Mr. Robinson might have seen

was shielding her face with her hands and shaking with silent laughter. The speaker was wavering on his feet very much as the caterpillar had wavered on its tail, and his wide gestures, clawing the air in search of the attention of his friends, suggested to Mr. Robinson the caterpillar's wild gropings for foothold where no foothold was. "Yes," thought Mr. Robinson, "the caterpillar was *my* host. No other face is turned to me."

However, as he thought this, a man came from a farther table and stood quite close, under the olive tree, between Mr. Robinson and the lighted doorway, looking down on him. The man stretched out his hand to the tree and leaned upon it. A freak of light caught the broad short hand, walnut-knuckled and brown, crooked over the bough. Mr. Robinson could not see the man's face at all, but he felt that the visit was friendly. To conciliate this sympathetic stranger, he would even have talked about the weather, or made a joke about pretty girls or beer; but he could not think of anything of that kind to say to a man whose hand, grasping an olive bough, was all that could be known of him. All that Mr. Robinson could do for the moment was to wonder what could have sent the man here. "It could not have been," thought Mr. Robinson humbly, "that he was attracted by my face, because nobody ever is." And then he began thinking how one man's loss is nearly always another man's gain, if considered broadly enough. For one to be forsaken, really, means that another has a new friend.

"This young man," thought Mr. Robinson, gazing at the black outline of the stranger's head, "has probably come here blindly, because of some sudden hurt, some stab, some insult, inflicted by his friends at that table over there—probably by a woman. Perhaps he thinks he has a broken heart (for he has young shoulders). Nothing short of a wound that temporarily robbed him of his social balance could make him do so strange a thing as suddenly to leave his friends and come here to stand silent by me in the shade. Yet if he only could—as some day, I am convinced, we all shall—know that the sum remains the

same—that some other lover is the happier for this loss of his—and that if he had gained a smile from her, the pain he now feels would simply have been shifted to another heart—not dispelled. . . . We only have to think impersonally enough, and even death—well, we are all either nearly dead or just born, more or less, and the balance of birth and death never appreciably alters. Personal thinking is the curse of existence. Why are we all crushed under the weight of this strangling *me* —this snake in our garden . . . ?"

So he said to the young man, "Isn't it a curious thing, looking round at young people and old people, that it doesn't really matter if they are born or dead—I mean to say, it's all the same whatever happens, if you follow me, and so many people mind when they needn't, if people would only realize—" At this moment there was a burst of clapping from the far table and the young man bounded from Mr. Robinson's side back to his friends, shouting, "Good egg—have you thought of a word already? Animal, vegetable, or mineral—and remember to speak up because I'm rather hard of hearing."

Mr. Robinson suddenly felt like Herbert Robinson, personally affronted. The sum of happiness (which of course remained unaltered by his setback) for a moment did not matter in the least. He pushed back his chair and walked away, leaving his cheese uneaten and the clown-faced dog without support. He went to his bedroom and sat down opposite his mirror, facing the reflection of his outward *me*. There sat the figure in the mirror, smooth, plump, pale, with small pouched eyes and thick, straight, wet-looking hair.

"What is this?" asked Mr. Robinson, studying the reflection of his disappointed face—the only human face he had seen that evening. "Look at me—I *am* alive—I am indeed very acutely alive—more alive, perhaps, than all these men and women half-blind—half-dead in their limitations of greed and sex. . . . It is true I have no personal claim on life; I am a virgin and I have no friends—yet I live intensely—and there

are—there *are*—*there are* other forms of life than personal life. The eagle and the artichoke are equally alive; and perhaps my way of life is nearer to the eagle's than the artichoke's. And must I be alone—must I live behind cold shoulders because I see *out* instead of *in*—the most vivid form of life conceivable, if only it could be lived perfectly?"

He tried to see himself in the mirror, as was his habit, as a mere pliable pillar of life, a turret of flesh with a prisoner called *life* inside it. He stared himself out of countenance, trying, as it were, to dissolve his poor body by understanding it—poor white, sweating, rubbery thing that was called Herbert Robinson and had no friends. But tonight the prisoner called *life* clung to his prison—tonight his body tingled with egotism—tonight the oblivion that he called wisdom would not come, and he could not become conscious, as he longed to, of the live sky above the roof, the long winds streaming about the valleys, the billions of contented, wary, or terrified creatures moving about the living dust, weeds, and waters of the world. He remained just Herbert Robinson who had not seen any human face while in the midst of his fellow men.

He began to feel an immediate craving—an almost revengeful lust—to be alone, far from men, books, mirrors, and lights, watching, all his life long, the bodiless, mindless movements of animals—ecstatic living things possessing no *me*. "I should scarcely know I was alive, then, and perhaps never even notice when I died. . . ." He decided he would go away next day, and give no group again the chance to excommunicate him.

He remembered that he had seen a notice at the door of the hotel giving the rare times at which an auto-bus left and arrived at St. Pierre. "I will leave by the early bus, before anyone is awake to turn his back on me."

He could not sleep, but lay uneasily on his bed reading the advertisements in a magazine he had brought with him. Ad-

vertisements always comforted him a good deal, because advertisers really, he thought, took a broad view; they wrote of—and to—their fellow men cynically and subtly, taking advantage of the vulgar passion for personal address, and yet treating humanity as one intricate mass—an instrument to be played upon. This seemed the ideal standpoint to Mr. Robinson, and yet he was insulted by the isolation such an ideal involved.

He dressed himself early, replaced in his suitcase the few clothes he had taken out, put some notes in an envelope addressed to Monsieur Dupont, and leaned out of the window to watch for the bus. St. Pierre, a sheaf of white-and-pink plaster houses, was woven together on a hill, like a haycock. The town, though compact and crowned by a sharp white bell-tower, seemed to have melted a little, like a thick candle; the centuries and the sun had softened its fortress outlines. The other hills, untopped by towns, seemed much more definitely constructed; they were austerely built of yellow and green blocks of vineyard, cemented by the dusty green of olive trees. Gleaming, white fluffy clouds peeped over the hills—"like kittens," thought Mr. Robinson who had a fancy for trying to make cosmic comparisons between the small and the big. On the terrace of the inn half a dozen dogs sprawled in the early sun. Over the valley a hawk balanced and swung in the air, so hungry after its night's fast that it swooped rashly and at random several times, and was caught up irritably into the air again after each dash, as though dangling on a plucked thread. Mr. Robinson leaned long on his sill looking at it, until his elbows felt sore from his weight, and he began to wonder where the bus was that was going to take him away to loneliness. He went down to the terrace, carrying his suitcase, and stood in the archway. There was no sound of a coming bus—no sound at all, in fact, except a splashing and a flapping and a murmuring to the left and right of him. A forward step or two showed him

that there were two long washing troughs, one on each side of the archway, each trough shaded by a stone gallery and further enclosed by a sort of trellis of leaning kneading women.

Mr. Robinson noticed uneasily that he could not see one woman's face; all were so deeply bent and absorbed. After a moment, however, a woman's voice from the row behind him asked him if he was waiting for the bus. He turned to reply, hoping to break the spell by finding an ingenuous rustic face lifted to look at him. But all the faces were bent once more, and it was another woman behind him again who told him that the bus had left ten minutes before. Once more the speaker bent over her work before Mr. Robinson had time to turn and see her face. "What a curious protracted accident," he thought, and had time to curse his strange isolation before he realized the irritation of being unable to leave St. Pierre for another half dozen hours. He flung his suitcase into the hall of the inn and walked off up a path that led through the vineyards. As if the whole affair had been prearranged, all the dogs on the terrace rose up and followed him, yawning and stretching surreptitiously, like workers reluctantly leaving their homes at the sound of a factory whistle.

Mr. Robinson, true to his habit, concentrated his attention on—or rather diffused it to embrace—the colors about him. The leaves of the vines especially held his eye; they wore the same frosty bloom that grapes themselves often wear—a sky-blue dew on the green leaf. Two magpies, with a bottle-green sheen on their wings, gave their police-rattle cry as he came near and then flew off, flaunting their long tails clumsily. A hundred feet higher, where the ground became too steep even for vines, Mr. Robinson found a grove of gnarled old olive trees, edging a thick wood of Spanish chestnuts. Here he sat down and looked between the tree-trunks and over the distorted shadows at the uneven yellow land and the thin blade of mat-blue sea stabbing the farthest hills. The dogs stood round him, expecting him to rise in a minute and lead them on

again. Seeing that he still sat where he was, they wagged their tails tolerantly but invitingly. Finally they resigned themselves to the inevitable and began philosophically walking about the grove, sniffing gently at various points in search of a makeshift stationary amusement.

Mr. Robinson watched them with a growing sense of comfort. "Here," he thought, "are the good undeliberate beasts again; I knew they would save me. They don't shut themselves away from life in their little individualities, or account uniquely for their lusts on the silly ground of personality. Their bodies aren't prisons—they're just dormitories. . . ." He delighted in watching the dogs busily engrossed in being alive without self-consciousness. After all, he thought, he did not really depend on men. (For he had been doubting his prized detachment most painfully.)

One of the dogs discovered a mousehole and, after thrusting his nose violently into it to verify the immediacy of the smell, began digging, but not very cleverly because he was too large a dog for such petty sports. The other dogs hurried to the spot and, having verified the smell for themselves, stood restively round the first discoverer, wearing the irritable look we all wear when watching someone else bungle over something we feel (erroneously) that we could do very much better ourselves. Finally they pushed the original dog aside and began trying to dig, all in the same spot, but, finding this impossible, they tapped different veins of the same lode-smell. Soon a space of some ten feet square was filled with a perfect tornado of flying dust, clods, grass, and piston-like forepaws. Hindlegs remained rooted while forelegs did all the work, but whenever the accumulation of earth to the rear of each dog became inconveniently deep, hindlegs, with a few impatient strong strokes, would dash the heap away to some distance—even as far as Mr. Robinson's boots. Quite suddenly all the dogs, with one impulse, admitted themselves beaten; they concluded without rancor that the area was unmistakably mouseless.

They signified their contempt for the place in the usual canine manner, and walked away, sniffing, panting, sniffing again for some new excitement.

Mr. Robinson, who had been, for the duration of the affair, a dog in spirit, expecting at every second that a horrified mouse would emerge from this cyclone of attack, imitated his leaders and quieted down with an insouciance equal to theirs. But he had escaped from the menace of humanity; he was eased—he was sleepy. . . .

He slept for a great many hours, and when he awoke the sunlight was slanting down at the same angle as the hill, throwing immense shadows across the vineyards. The dogs had gone home. And there, on a space of flattened earth between two spreading tree-roots, was a mouse and its family. Mr. Robinson, all mouse now, with no memory of his canine past, lay quite still on his side. The mother mouse moved in spasms, stopping to quiver her nose over invisible interests in the dust. Her brood were like little curled feathers, specks of down blown about by a fitful wind. There seemed to be only one license to move shared by this whole mouse family; when mother stopped, one infant mouse would puff forward, and as soon as its impulse expired, another thistledown brother would glide erratically an inch or two. In this leisurely way the family moved across the space of earth and into the grass, appearing again and again between the green blades. Mr. Robinson lay still, sycophantically reverent.

Between two blades of grass the senior mouse came out onto a little plateau, about eighteen inches away from Mr. Robinson's unwinking eye. At that range Mr. Robinson could see its face as clearly as one sees the face of a wife over a breakfast table. It was a dignified but greedy face; its eyes, in so far as they had any expression at all, expressed a cold heart; its attraction lay in its texture, a delicious velvet—and that the mouse would never allow a human finger, however friendly, to enjoy. It would have guarded its person as a classical virgin

guarded her honor. As soon as Mr. Robinson saw the mouse's remote expression he felt as a lost sailor on a sinking ship might feel, who throws his last rope—and no saving hands grasp it.

He heard the sound of human footsteps behind him. There was a tiny explosion of flight beside him—and the mouse family was not there. Through the little grove marched a line of men in single file, going home from their work in the vineyards over the hill. Mr. Robinson sat up and noticed, with a cold heart, that all the men wore the rush hats of the country pulled down against the low last light of the sun, and that not one face was visible.

Mr. Robinson sat for some time with his face in his hands. He felt his eyes with his finger, and the shape of his nose and cheekbone; he bit his finger with his strong teeth. Here was a face—the only human face in the world. Suddenly craving for the sight of that friend behind the mirror, he got up and walked back to the Trois Moineaux. He found himself very hungry, having starved all day; but his isolation gave him a so much deeper sense of lack than did his empty stomach that, although dinner was in progress among the bands of light and shade on the terrace, his first act was to run to his room and stand before the mirror. There was a mistiness in the mirror. He rubbed it with his hand. The mistiness persisted—a compact haze of blankness that exactly covered the reflection of his face. He moved to a different angle—he moved the mirror—he saw clearly the reflection of the room, of his tweed-clad figure, of his tie, of his suitcase in the middle of the floor; but his face remained erased, like an unsatisfactory charcoal sketch. Filled with an extraordinary fear, he stood facing the mirror for some minutes, feeling with tremulous fingers for his eyes, his lips, his forehead. There seemed to him to be the same sensation of haze in his sense of touch as in his eyesight—a nervelessness—a feeling of nauseating contact with a dead thing. It was like touching with an unsuspecting hand one's own limb numbed by cold or by an accident of position.

Mr. Robinson walked downstairs, dazed, and out onto the terrace. As before, the shadowed tables looking out over the edge of the terrace were already surrounded by laughing, chattering parties. Mr. Robinson took his seat, as before, under the olive tree. "Bring me a bottle of . . . Sauterne," he said to the waiter (for he remembered that his late unmarried sister used to sustain upon this wine a reputation for wit in the boarding house in which she lived). "And, waiter, isn't there a table free looking out at the view? I can't see anything here." It was not the view he craved, of course, but only a point of vantage from which to see the faces of his mysterious noisy neighbors. His need for seeing faces was more immediate than ever, now that his one friend had failed him.

"There will be tables free there in a moment," said the waiter. "They are all going to dance soon. They're only waiting for the moon." And the waiter nodded his shadowed face towards a distant hill, behind which—looking at this moment like a great far red fire—the moon was coming up. "Look, the moon, the moon, the moon, look . . ." everyone on the terrace was saying. And a few moments later, the moon—now completely round but cut in half by a neat bar of cloud, took flight lightly from the top of the hill.

There was a scraping of chairs, the scraping of a gramophone, and half a dozen couples of young men and women began dancing between the tall Italian urns and the olive trees on the terrace. Mr. Robinson poured himself out a large tumbler of Sauterne. "Waiter, I don't want a table at the edge now —I want one near the dancers—I want to see their faces."

"There are no tables free in the center of the terrace now. Several are vacant at the edge."

"I can see a table there, near the dancers, with only two chairs occupied. Surely I could sit with them."

"That table is taken by a large party, but most of them are dancing. They will come back there in a moment."

Mr. Robinson, disregarding the waiter and clutching his

tumbler in one hand and his bottle in the other, strode to the table he had chosen. "I'm *too* lonely—I must sit here."

"So lonely, poo-oo-oor man," said the woman at the table, a stout middle-aged woman with high shoulders and a high bosom clad in saxe-blue sequins. She turned her face towards him in the pink light of the moon. Mr. Robinson, though desperate, was not surprised. Her face was the same blank—the same terrible disc of nothingness that he had seen in his mirror. Mr. Robinson looked at her companion in dreadful certainty. A twin blank faced him.

"Sh-lonely, eh?" came a thick young voice out of nothingness. "Well, m'lad, you'll be damn sight lonelier yet in minute 'f y' come buttin' in on—"

"Ow, Ronnie," expostulated his frightful friend—but at that moment the gramophone fell silent and the dancers came back to their table. Mr. Robinson scanned the spaces that should have been their faces one by one; they were like discs of dazzle seen after unwisely meeting the eye of the sun.

"This old feller sayzzz—lonely—pinched your chair, Belle —"

"Never mind, duckie," said Belle—and threw herself across Mr. Robinson's knee. "Plenty of room for little me."

The white emptiness of her face that was no face blocked out Mr. Robinson's view of the world.

"Oh, my God!" she cried, jumping up suddenly. "I know why he's lonely—why—the man's not alive. Look at his face!"

"I am—I am—I am—" shouted Mr. Robinson in terror. "I'll show you I am . . ." He lurched after her and dragged her among the dancers as the music began again. He shut his eyes. He could hear her wild animal shrieks of laughter and feel her thin struggling body under his hands.

Mr. Robinson sat quite still but racked by confusion, excitement, and disgust, beside the road on the wall of a vineyard, watching the last stars slip down into the haze that en-

haloed the hills. The moon had gone long ago. All Mr. Robinson's heart was set on catching the bus this morning; to him the dawn that was even now imperceptibly replacing the starlight was only a herald of the bus and of escape. He had no thoughts and no plans beyond catching the bus. He knew that he was cold, but flight would warm him; that he was hungry and thirsty, but flight would nourish him; that he was exhausted and broken-hearted, but flight would ease and comfort him.

A white glow crowned a hill, behind which the sky had long been pearly, and in a minute an unbearably bright ray shot from the hill into Mr. Robinson's eyes. The dazzling domed brow of the sun rose between a tree and a crag, and a lily-white light rushed into the valley.

The bus, crackling and crunching, waddled round the bend. Mr. Robinson hailed it with a distraught cry and gesture.

"Enfin . . . . tres peu de places, m'sieu—n'y a qu'un tout p'tit coin par ici . . ."

Mr. Robinson had no need now to look at the face of the driver, or at the rows of senseless sunlit ghosts that filled the bus. He knew his curse by now. He climbed into the narrow place indicated beside the driver. The bus lurched on down the narrow winding road that overhung the steep vineyards of the valley. Far below—so far below that one could not see the movement of the water—a yellow stream enmeshed its rocks in a net of plaited strands.

Mr. Robinson sat beside the driver, not looking at that phantom faceless face—so insulting to the comfortable sun—but looking only at the road that was leading him to escape. How far to flee he did not know, but all the hope there was, he felt, lay beyond the farthest turn of the road. After one spellbound look at the sun-blinded face of St. Pierre, clinging to its hive-like hill, he looked forward only, at the winding perilous road.

And his acute eyes saw, in the middle of the way, half a dozen specks of live fur, blowing about a shallow rut. . . .

The bus's heavy approach had already caused a certain panic in the mouse family. One atom blew one way, one another; there was a sort of little muddled maze of running mice in the road.

Mr. Robinson's heart seemed to burst. Before he was aware, he had sprung to his feet and seized the wheel of the bus from the driver. He had about twenty seconds in which to watch the mice scuttling into the grass—to watch the low loose wall of the outer edge of the road crumble beneath the plunging weight of the bus. He saw, leaning crazily towards him, the face—the *face*—rolling eyes, tight grinning lips—of the driver, looking down at death. There, far down, was the yellow net of the river, spread to catch them all.

JOHN STEINBECK

The Leader of the People

On Saturday afternoon Billy Buck, the ranch-hand, raked together the last of the old year's haystack and pitched small forkfuls over the wire fence to a few mildly interested cattle. High in the air small clouds like puffs of cannon smoke were driven eastward by the March wind. The wind could be heard whishing in the brush on the ridge crests, but no breath of it penetrated down into the ranch-cup.

The little boy, Jody, emerged from the house eating a thick piece of buttered bread. He saw Billy working on the last of the haystack. Jody tramped down scuffing his shoes in a way he had been told was destructive to good shoe-leather. A flock of white pigeons flew out of the black cypress tree as Jody passed, and circled the tree and landed again. A half-grown tortoise-shell cat leaped from the bunkhouse porch, galloped on stiff legs across the road, whirled and galloped back again. Jody picked up a stone to help the game along, but he was too late, for the cat was under the porch before the stone could be discharged. He threw the stone into the cypress tree and started the white pigeons on another whirling flight.

Arriving at the used-up haystack, the boy leaned against the

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barbed wire fence. "Will that be all of it, do you think?" he asked.

The middle-aged ranch-hand stopped his careful raking and stuck his fork into the ground. He took off his black hat and smoothed down his hair. "Nothing left of it that isn't soggy from ground moisture," he said. He replaced his hat and rubbed his dry leathery hands together.

"Ought to be plenty mice," Jody suggested.

"Lousy with them," said Billy. "Just crawling with mice."

"Well, maybe, when you get all through, I could call the dogs and hunt the mice."

"Sure, I guess you could," said Billy Buck. He lifted a forkful of the damp ground-hay and threw it into the air. Instantly three mice leaped out and burrowed frantically under the hay again.

Jody sighed with satisfaction. Those plump, sleek, arrogant mice were doomed. For eight months they had lived and multiplied in the haystack. They had been immune from cats, from traps, from poison and from Jody. They had grown smug in their security, overbearing and fat. Now the time of disaster had come; they would not survive another day.

Billy looked up at the top of the hills that surrounded the ranch. "Maybe you better ask your father before you do it," he suggested.

"Well, where is he? I'll ask him now."

"He rode up to the ridge ranch after dinner. He'll be back pretty soon."

Jody slumped against the fence post. "I don't think he'd care."

As Billy went back to his work he said ominously, "You'd better ask him anyway. You know how he is."

Jody did know. His father, Carl Tiflin, insisted upon giving permission for anything that was done on the ranch, whether it was important or not. Jody sagged farther against the post

until he was sitting on the ground. He looked up at the little puffs of wind-driven cloud. "Is it like to rain, Billy?"

"It might. The wind's good for it, but not strong enough."

"Well, I hope it don't rain until after I kill those damn mice." He looked over his shoulder to see whether Billy had noticed the mature profanity. Billy worked on without comment.

Jody turned back and looked at the side-hill where the road from the outside world came down. The hill was washed with lean March sunshine. Silver thistles, blue lupins and a few poppies bloomed among the sage bushes. Halfway up the hill Jody could see Doubletree Mutt, the black dog, digging in a squirrel hole. He paddled for a while and then paused to kick bursts of dirt out between his hind legs, and he dug with an earnestness which belied the knowledge he must have had that no dog had ever caught a squirrel by digging in a hole.

Suddenly, while Jody watched, the black dog stiffened, and backed out of the hole and looked up the hill toward the cleft in the ridge where the road came through. Jody looked up too. For a moment Carl Tiflin on horseback stood out against the pale sky and then he moved down the road toward the house. He carried something white in his hand.

The boy started to his feet. "He's got a letter," Jody cried. He trotted away toward the ranch house, for the letter would probably be read aloud and he wanted to be there. He reached the house before his father did, and ran in. He heard Carl dismount from his creaking saddle and slap the horse on the side to send it to the barn where Billy would unsaddle it and turn it out.

Jody ran into the kitchen. "We got a letter," he cried.

His mother looked up from a pan of beans. "Who has?"

"Father has. I saw it in his hand."

Carl strode into the kitchen then, and Jody's mother asked, "Who's the letter from, Carl?"

He frowned quickly. "How did you know there was a letter?"

She nodded her head in the boy's direction. "Big-Britches Jody told me."

Jody was embarrassed.

His father looked down at him contemptuously. "He is getting to be a Big-Britches," Carl said. "He's minding everybody's business but his own. Got his big nose into everything."

Mrs. Tiflin relented a little. "Well, he hasn't enough to keep him busy. Who's the letter from?"

Carl still frowned on Jody. "I'll keep him busy if he isn't careful." He held out a sealed letter. "I guess it's from your father."

Mrs. Tiflin took a hairpin from her head and slit open the flap. Her lips pursed judiciously. Jody saw her eyes snap back and forth over the lines. "He says," she translated, "he says he's going to drive out Saturday to stay for a little while. Why, this is Saturday. The letter must have been delayed." She looked at the postmark. "This was mailed day before yesterday. It should have been here yesterday." She looked up questioningly at her husband, and then her face darkened angrily. "Now what have you got that look on you for? He doesn't come often."

Carl turned his eyes away from her anger. He could be stern with her most of the time, but when occasionally her temper arose, he could not combat it.

"What's the matter with you?" she demanded again.

In his explanation there was a tone of apology Jody himself might have used. "It's just that he talks," Carl said lamely. "Just talks."

"Well, what of it? You talk yourself."

"Sure I do. But your father only talks about one thing."

"Indians!" Jody broke in excitedly. "Indians and crossing the plains!"

Carl turned fiercely on him. "You get out, Mr. Big-Britches! Go on, now! Get out!"

Jody went miserably out the back door and closed the

screen with elaborate quietness. Under the kitchen window his shamed, downcast eyes fell upon a curiously shaped stone, a stone of such fascination that he squatted down and picked it up and turned it over in his hands.

The voices came clearly to him through the open kitchen window. "Jody's damn well right," he heard his father say. "Just Indians and crossing the plains. I've heard that story about how the horses got driven off about a thousand times. He just goes on and on, and he never changes a word in the things he tells."

When Mrs. Tiflin answered her tone was so changed that Jody, outside the window, looked up from his study of the stone. Her voice had become soft and explanatory. Jody knew how her face would have changed to match the tone. She said quietly, "Look at it this way, Carl. That was the big thing in my father's life. He led a wagon train clear across the plains to the coast, and when it was finished, his life was done. It was a big thing to do, but it didn't last long enough. Look!" she continued, "it's as though he was born to do that, and after he finished it, there wasn't anything more for him to do but think about it and talk about it. If there'd been any farther west to go, he'd have gone. He's told me so himself. But at last there was the ocean. He lives right by the ocean where he had to stop."

She had caught Carl, caught him and entangled him in her soft tone.

"I've seen him," he agreed quietly. "He goes down and stares off west over the ocean." His voice sharpened a little. "And then he goes up to the Horseshoe Club in Pacific Grove, and he tells people how the Indians drove off the horses."

She tried to catch him again. "Well, it's everything to him. You might be patient with him and pretend to listen."

Carl turned impatiently away. "Well, if it gets too bad, I can always go down to the bunkhouse and sit with Billy," he

said irritably. He walked through the house and slammed the front door after him.

Jody ran to his chores. He dumped the grain to the chickens without chasing any of them. He gathered the eggs from the nests. He trotted into the house with the wood and interlaced it so carefully in the wood-box that two armloads seemed to fill it to overflowing.

His mother had finished the beans by now. She stirred up the fire and brushed off the stove-top with a turkey wing. Jody peered cautiously at her to see whether any rancor toward him remained. "Is he coming today?" Jody asked.

"That's what his letter said."

"Maybe I better walk up the road to meet him."

Mrs. Tiflin clanged the stove-lid shut. "That would be nice," she said. "He'd probably like to be met."

"I guess I'll just do it then."

Outside, Jody whistled shrilly to the dogs. "Come on up the hill," he commanded. The two dogs waved their tails and ran ahead. Along the roadside the sage had tender new tips. Jody tore off some pieces and rubbed them on his hands until the air was filled with a sharp wild smell. With a rush the dogs leaped from the road and yapped into the brush after a rabbit. That was the last Jody saw of them, for when they failed to catch the rabbit, they went back home.

Jody plodded on up the hill toward the ridge top. When he reached the little cleft where the road came through, the afternoon wind struck him and blew up his hair and ruffled his shirt. He looked down on the little hills and ridges below and then out at the huge green Salinas Valley. He could see the white town of Salinas far out in the flat and the flash of its windows under the waning sun. Directly below him, in an oak tree, a crow congress had convened. The tree was black with crows all cawing at once.

Then Jody's eyes followed the wagon road down from the

ridge where he stood, and lost it behind a hill, and picked it up again on the other side. On that distant stretch he saw a cart slowly pulled by a bay horse. It disappeared behind the hill. Jody sat down on the ground and watched the place where the cart would reappear again. The wind sang on the hilltops and the puff-ball clouds hurried eastward.

Then the cart came into sight and stopped. A man dressed in black dismounted from the seat and walked to the horse's head. Although it was so far away, Jody knew he had unhooked the check-rein, for the horse's head dropped forward. The horse moved on, and the man walked slowly up the hill beside it. Jody gave a glad cry and ran down the road toward them. The squirrels bumped along off the road, and a roadrunner flirted its tail and raced over the edge of the hill and sailed out like a glider.

Jody tried to leap into the middle of his shadow at every step. A stone rolled under his foot and he went down. Around a little bend he raced, and there, a short distance ahead, were his grandfather and the cart. The boy dropped from his unseemly running and approached at a dignified walk.

The horse plodded stumble-footedly up the hill and the old man walked beside it. In the lowering sun their giant shadows flickered darkly behind them. The grandfather was dressed in a black broadcloth suit and he wore kid congress gaiters and a black tie on a short, hard collar. He carried his black slouch hat in his hand. His white beard was cropped close and his white eyebrows overhung his eyes like moustaches. The blue eyes were sternly merry. About the whole face and figure there was a granite dignity, so that every motion seemed an impossible thing. Once at rest, it seemed the old man would be stone, would never move again. His steps were slow and certain. Once made, no step could ever be retraced; once headed in a direction, the path would never bend nor the pace increase nor slow.

When Jody appeared around the bend, Grandfather waved

his hat slowly in welcome, and he called, "Why Jody! Come down to meet me, have you?"

Jody sidled near and turned and matched his step to the old man's step and stiffened his body and dragged his heels a little. "Yes, sir," he said. "We got your letter only today."

"Should have been here yesterday," said Grandfather. "It certainly should. How are all the folks?"

"They're fine, sir." He hesitated and then suggested shyly, "Would you like to come on a mouse hunt tomorrow, sir?"

"Mouse hunt, Jody?" Grandfather chuckled. "Have the people of this generation come down to hunting mice? They aren't very strong, the new people, but I hardly thought mice would be game for them."

"No, sir. It's just play. The haystack's gone. I'm going to drive out the mice to the dogs. And you can watch, or even beat the hay a little."

The stern, merry eyes turned down on him. "I see. You don't eat them, then. You haven't come to that yet."

Jody explained, "The dogs eat them, sir. It wouldn't be much like hunting Indians, I guess."

"No, not much—but then later, when the troops were hunting Indians and shooting children and burning teepees, it wasn't much different from your mouse hunt."

They topped the rise and started down into the ranch-cup, and they lost the sun from their shoulders. "You've grown," Grandfather said. "Nearly an inch, I should say."

"More," Jody boasted. "Where they mark me on the door, I'm up more than an inch since Thanksgiving even."

Grandfather's rich throaty voice said, "Maybe you're getting too much water and turning to pith and stalk. Wait until you head out, and then we'll see."

Jody looked quickly into the old man's face to see whether his feelings should be hurt, but there was no will to injure, no punishing nor putting-in-your-place light in the keen blue eyes. "We might kill a pig," Jody suggested.

"Oh, no! I couldn't let you do that. You're just humoring me. It isn't the time and you know it."

"You know Riley, the big boar, sir?"

"Yes. I remember Riley well."

"Well, Riley ate a hole into that same haystack, and it fell down on him and smothered him."

"Pigs do that when they can," said Grandfather.

"Riley was a nice pig, for a boar, sir. I rode him sometimes, and he didn't mind."

A door slammed at the house below them, and they saw Jody's mother standing on the porch waving her apron in welcome. And they saw Carl Tiflin walking up from the barn to be at the house for the arrival.

The sun had disappeared from the hills by now. The blue smoke from the house chimney hung in flat layers in the purpling ranch-cup. The puff-ball clouds, dropped by the falling wind, hung listlessly in the sky. Billy Buck came out of the bunkhouse and flung a wash basin of soapy water on the ground. He had been shaving in mid-week, for Billy held Grandfather in reverence, and Grandfather said that Billy was one of the few men of the new generation who had not gone soft. Although Billy was in middle age, Grandfather considered him a boy. Now Billy was hurrying toward the house too.

When Jody and Grandfather arrived, the three were waiting for them in front of the yard gate.

Carl said, "Hello, sir. We've been looking for you."

Mrs. Tiflin kissed Grandfather on the side of his beard, and stood still while his big hand patted her shoulder. Billy shook hands solemnly, grinning under his straw moustache. "I'll put up your horse," said Billy, and he led the rig away.

Grandfather watched him go, and then, turning back to the group, he said as he had said a hundred times before, "There's a good boy. I knew his father, old Mule-tail Buck. I never knew why they called him Mule-tail except he packed mules."

Mrs. Tiflin turned and led the way into the house. "How long are you going to stay, Father? Your letter didn't say."

"Well, I don't know. I thought I'd stay about two weeks. But I never stay as long as I think I'm going to."

In a short while they were sitting at the white oilcloth table eating their supper. The lamp with the tin reflector hung over the table. Outside the dining-room windows the big moths battered softly against the glass.

Grandfather cut his steak into tiny pieces and chewed slowly. "I'm hungry," he said. "Driving out here got my appetite up. It's like when we were crossing. We all got so hungry every night we could hardly wait to let the meat get done. I could eat about five pounds of buffalo meat every night."

"It's moving around does it," said Billy. "My father was a government packer. I helped him when I was a kid. Just the two of us could about clean up a deer's ham."

"I knew your father, Billy," said Grandfather. "A fine man he was. They called him Mule-tail Buck. I don't know why except he packed mules."

"That was it," Billy agreed. "He packed mules."

Grandfather put down his knife and fork and looked around the table. "I remember one time we ran out of meat—" His voice dropped to a curious low sing-song, dropped into a tonal groove the story had worn for itself. "There was no buffalo, no antelope, not even rabbits. The hunters couldn't even shoot a coyote. That was the time for the leader to be on the watch. I was the leader, and I kept my eyes open. Know why? Well, just the minute the people began to get hungry they'd start slaughtering the team oxen. Do you believe that? I've heard of parties that just ate up their draft cattle. Started from the middle and worked toward the ends. Finally they'd eat the lead pair, and then the wheelers. The leader of a party had to keep them from doing that."

In some manner a big moth got into the room and circled

the hanging kerosene lamp. Billy got up and tried to clap it between his hands. Carl struck with a cupped palm and caught the moth and broke it. He walked to the window and dropped it out.

"As I was saying," Grandfather began again, but Carl interrupted him. "You'd better eat some more meat. All the rest of us are ready for our pudding."

Jody saw a flash of anger in his mother's eyes. Grandfather picked up his knife and fork. "I'm pretty hungry, all right," he said. "I'll tell you about that later."

When supper was over, when the family and Billy Buck sat in front of the fireplace in the other room, Jody anxiously watched Grandfather. He saw the signs he knew. The bearded head leaned forward; the eyes lost their sternness and looked wonderingly into the fire; the big lean fingers laced themselves on the black knees. "I wonder," he began, "I just wonder whether I ever told you how those thieving Piutes drove off thirty-five of our horses."

"I think you did," Carl interrupted. "Wasn't it just before you went up into the Tahoe country?"

Grandfather turned quickly toward his son-in-law. "That's right. I guess I must have told you that story."

"Lots of times," Carl said cruelly, and he avoided his wife's eyes. But he felt the angry eyes on him, and he said, " 'Course I'd like to hear it again."

Grandfather looked back at the fire. His fingers unlaced and laced again. Jody knew how he felt, how his insides were collapsed and empty. Hadn't Jody been called a Big-Britches that very afternoon? He arose to heroism and opened himself to the term Big-Britches again. "Tell about Indians," he said softly.

Grandfather's eyes grew stern again. "Boys always want to hear about Indians. It was a job for men, but boys want to hear about it. Well, let's see. Did I ever tell you how I wanted each wagon to carry a long iron plate?"

Everyone but Jody remained silent. Jody said, "No. You didn't."

"Well, when the Indians attacked, we always put the wagons in a circle and fought from between the wheels. I thought that if every wagon carried a long plate with rifle holes, the men could stand the plates on the outside of the wheels when the wagons were in the circle and they would be protected. It would save lives and that would make up for the extra weight of the iron. But of course the party wouldn't do it. No party had done it before and they couldn't see why they should go to the expense. They lived to regret it, too."

Jody looked at his mother, and knew from her expression that she was not listening at all. Carl picked at a callus on his thumb and Billy Buck watched a spider crawling up the wall.

Grandfather's tone dropped into its narrative groove again. Jody knew in advance exactly what words would fall. The story droned on, speeded up for the attack, grew sad over the wounds, struck a dirge at the burials on the great plains. Jody sat quietly watching Grandfather. The stern blue eyes were detached. He looked as though he were not very interested in the story himself.

When it was finished, when the pause had been politely respected as the frontier of the story, Billy Buck stood up and stretched and hitched his trousers. "I guess I'll turn in," he said. Then he faced Grandfather. "I've got an old powder horn and a cap and ball pistol down to the bunkhouse. Did I ever show them to you?"

Grandfather nodded slowly. "Yes, I think you did, Billy. Reminds me of a pistol I had when I was leading the people across." Billy stood politely until the little story was done, and then he said, "Good night," and went out of the house.

Carl Tiflin tried to turn the conversation then. "How's the country between here and Monterey? I've heard it's pretty dry."

"It is dry," said Grandfather. "There's not a drop of water

in the Laguna Seca. But it's a long pull from '87. The whole country was powder then, and in '61 I believe all the coyotes starved to death. We had fifteen inches of rain this year."

"Yes, but it all came too early. We could do with some now." Carl's eye fell on Jody. "Hadn't you better be getting to bed?"

Jody stood up obediently. "Can I kill the mice in the old haystack, sir?"

"Mice? Oh! Sure, kill them all off. Billy said there isn't any good hay left."

Jody exchanged a secret and satisfying look with Grandfather. "I'll kill every one tomorrow," he promised.

Jody lay in his bed and thought of the impossible world of Indians and buffaloes, a world that had ceased to be forever. He wished he could have been living in the heroic time, but he knew he was not of heroic timber. No one living now, save possibly Billy Buck, was worthy to do the things that had been done. A race of giants had lived then, fearless men, men of a staunchness unknown in this day. Jody thought of the wide plains and of the wagons moving across like centipedes. He thought of Grandfather on a huge white horse, marshaling the people. Across his mind marched the great phantoms, and they marched off the earth and they were gone.

He came back to the ranch for a moment, then. He heard the dull rushing sound that space and silence make. He heard one of the dogs, out in the doghouse, scratching a flea and bumping his elbow against the floor with every stroke. Then the wind rose again and the black cypress groaned and Jody went to sleep.

He was up half an hour before the triangle sounded for breakfast. His mother was rattling the stove to make the flames roar when Jody went through the kitchen. "You're up early," she said. "Where are you going?"

"Out to get a good stick. We're going to kill the mice today."

"Who is 'we'?"

"Why, Grandfather and I."

"So you've got him in it. You always like to have someone in with you in case there's blame to share."

"I'll be right back," said Jody. "I just want to have a good stick ready for after breakfast."

He closed the screen door after him and went out into the cool blue morning. The birds were noisy in the dawn and the ranch cats came down from the hill like blunt snakes. They had been hunting gophers in the dark, and although the four cats were full of gopher meat, they sat in a semi-circle at the back door and mewed piteously for milk. Doubletree Mutt and Smasher moved sniffing along the edge of the brush, performing the duty with rigid ceremony, but when Jody whistled, their heads jerked up and their tails waved. They plunged down to him, wriggling their skins and yawning. Jody patted their heads seriously, and moved on to the weathered scrap pile. He selected an old broom handle and a short piece of inch-square scrap wood. From his pocket he took a shoelace and tied the ends of the sticks loosely together to make a flail. He whistled his new weapon through the air and struck the ground experimentally, while the dogs leaped aside and whined with apprehension.

Jody turned and started down past the house toward the old haystack ground to look over the field of slaughter, but Billy Buck, sitting patiently on the back steps, called to him, "You better come back. It's only a couple of minutes till breakfast."

Jody changed his course and moved toward the house. He leaned his flail against the steps. "That's to drive the mice out," he said. "I'll bet they're fat. I'll bet they don't know what's going to happen to them today."

"No, nor you either," Billy remarked philosophically, "nor me, nor anyone."

Jody was staggered by this thought. He knew it was true. His imagination twitched away from the mouse hunt. Then his mother came out on the back porch and struck the triangle, and all thoughts fell in a heap.

Grandfather hadn't appeared at the table when they sat down. Billy nodded at his empty chair. "He's all right? He isn't sick?"

"He takes a long time to dress," said Mrs. Tiflin. "He combs his whiskers and rubs up his shoes and brushes his clothes."

Carl scattered sugar on his mush. "A man that's led a wagon train across the plains has got to be pretty careful how he dresses."

Mrs. Tiflin turned on him. "Don't do that, Carl! Please don't!" There was more of threat than of request in her tone. And the threat irritated Carl.

"Well, how many times do I have to listen to the story of the iron plates, and the thirty-five horses? That time's done. Why can't he forget it, now it's done?" He grew angrier while he talked, and his voice rose. "Why does he have to tell them over and over? He came across the plains. All right! Now it's finished. Nobody wants to hear about it over and over."

The door into the kitchen closed softly. The four at the table sat frozen. Carl laid his mush spoon on the table and touched his chin with his fingers.

Then the kitchen door opened and Grandfather walked in. His mouth smiled tightly and his eyes were squinted. "Good morning," he said, and he sat down and looked at his mush dish.

Carl could not leave it there. "Did—did you hear what I said?"

Grandfather jerked a little nod.

"I don't know what got into me, sir. I didn't mean it. I was just being funny."

Jody glanced in shame at his mother, and he saw that she was looking at Carl, and that she wasn't breathing. It was an awful thing that he was doing. He was tearing himself to pieces to talk like that. It was a terrible thing to him to retract a word, but to retract it in shame was infinitely worse.

Grandfather looked sidewise. "I'm trying to get right side

up," he said gently. "I'm not being mad. I don't mind what you said, but it might be true, and I would mind that."

"It isn't true," said Carl. "I'm not feeling well this morning. I'm sorry I said it."

"Don't be sorry, Carl. An old man doesn't see things sometimes. Maybe you're right. The crossing is finished. Maybe it should be forgotten, now it's done."

Carl got up from the table. "I've had enough to eat. I'm going to work. Take your time, Billy!" He walked quickly out of the diningroom. Billy gulped the rest of his food and followed soon after. But Jody could not leave his chair.

"Won't you tell any more stories?" Jody asked.

"Why, sure I'll tell them, but only when—I'm sure people want to hear them."

"I like to hear them, sir."

"Oh! Of course you do, but you're a little boy. It was a job for men, but only little boys like to hear about it."

Jody got up from his place. "I'll wait outside for you, sir. I've got a good stick for those mice."

He waited by the gate until the old man came out on the porch. "Let's go down and kill the mice now," Jody called.

"I think I'll just sit in the sun, Jody. You go kill the mice."

"You can use my stick if you like."

"No, I'll just sit here a while."

Jody turned disconsolately away, and walked down toward the old haystack. He tried to whip up his enthusiasm with thoughts of the fat juicy mice. He beat the ground with his flail. The dogs coaxed and whined about him, but he could not go. Back at the house he could see Grandfather sitting on the porch, looking small and thin and black.

Jody gave up and went to sit on the steps at the old man's feet.

"Back already? Did you kill the mice?"

"No, sir. I'll kill them some other day."

The morning flies buzzed close to the ground and the ants

dashed about in front of the steps. The heavy smell of sage slipped down the hill. The porch boards grew warm in the sunshine.

Jody hardly knew when Grandfather started to talk. "I shouldn't stay here, feeling the way I do." He examined his strong old hands. "I feel as though the crossing wasn't worth doing." His eyes moved up the side-hill and stopped on a motionless hawk perched on a dead limb. "I tell those old stories, but they're not what I want to tell. I only know how I want people to feel when I tell them.

"It wasn't Indians that were important, nor adventures, nor even getting out here. It was a whole bunch of people made into one big crawling beast. And I was the head. It was westering and westering. Every man wanted something for himself, but the big beast that was all of them wanted only westering. I was the leader, but if I hadn't been there, someone else would have been the head. The thing had to have a head.

"Under the little bushes the shadows were black at white noonday. When we saw the mountains at last, we cried—all of us. But it wasn't getting here that mattered, it was movement and westering.

"We carried life out here and set it down the way those ants carry eggs. And I was the leader. The westering was as big as God, and the slow steps that made the movement piled up and piled up until the continent was crossed.

"Then we came down to the sea, and it was done." He stopped and wiped his eyes until the rims were red. "That's what I should be telling instead of stories."

When Jody spoke, Grandfather started and looked down at him. "Maybe I could lead the people some day," Jody said.

The old man smiled. "There's no place to go. There's the ocean to stop you. There's a line of old men along the shore hating the ocean because it stopped them."

"In boats I might, sir."

"No place to go, Jody. Every place is taken. But that's not

the worst—no, not the worst. Westering has died out of the people. Westering isn't a hunger any more. It's all done. Your father is right. It is finished." He laced his fingers on his knee and looked at them.

Jody felt very sad. "If you'd like a glass of lemonade I could make it for you."

Grandfather was about to refuse, and then he saw Jody's face. "That would be nice," he said. "Yes, it would be nice to drink a lemonade."

Jody ran into the kitchen where his mother was wiping the last of the breakfast dishes. "Can I have a lemon to make a lemonade for Grandfather?"

His mother mimicked—"And another lemon to make a lemonade for you."

"No, ma'am. I don't want one."

"Jody! You're sick!" Then she stopped suddenly. "Take a lemon out of the cooler," she said softly. "Here, I'll reach the squeezer down to you."

KATHERINE MANSFIELD

The Doll's House

When dear old Mrs. Hay went back to town after staying with the Burnells she sent the children a doll's house. It was so big that the carter and Pat carried it into the courtyard, and there it stayed, propped up on two wooden boxes beside the feed-room door. No harm could come of it; it was summer. And perhaps the smell of paint would have gone off by the time it had to be taken in. For, really, the smell of paint coming from that doll's house ("Sweet of old Mrs. Hay, of course; most sweet and generous!")—but the smell of paint was quite enough to make any one seriously ill, in Aunt Beryl's opinion. Even before the sacking was taken off. And when it was. . . .

There stood the doll's house, a dark, oily, spinach green, picked out with bright yellow. Its two solid little chimneys, glued on to the roof, were painted red and white, and the door, gleaming with yellow varnish, was like a little slab of toffee. Four windows, real windows, were divided into panes by a broad streak of green. There was actually a tiny porch, too, painted yellow, with big lumps of congealed paint hanging along the edge.

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But perfect, perfect little house! Who could possibly mind the smell? It was part of the joy, part of the newness.

"Open it quickly, some one!"

The hook at the side was stuck fast. Pat pried it open with his penknife, and the whole house front swung back, and—there you were, gazing at one and the same moment into the drawing room and dining room, the kitchen and two bedrooms. That is the way for a house to open! Why don't all houses open like that? How much more exciting than peering through the slit of a door into a mean little hall with a hatstand and two umbrellas! That is—isn't it?—what you long to know about a house when you put your hand on the knocker. Perhaps it is the way God opens houses at dead of night when He is taking a quiet turn with an angel. . . .

"O-oh!" The Burnell children sounded as though they were in despair. It was too marvellous; it was too much for them. They had never seen anything like it in their lives. All the rooms were papered. There were pictures on the walls, painted on the paper, with gold frames complete. Red carpet covered all the floors except the kitchen; red plush chairs in the drawing room, green in the dining room; tables, beds with real bedclothes, a cradle, a stove, a dresser with tiny plates and one big jug. But what Kezia liked more than anything, what she liked frightfully, was the lamp. It stood in the middle of the dining-room table, an exquisite little amber lamp with a white globe. It was even filled all ready for lighting, though, of course, you couldn't light it. But there was something inside that looked like oil, and that moved when you shook it.

The father and mother dolls, who sprawled very stiff as though they had fainted in the drawing room, and their two little children asleep upstairs, were really too big for the doll's house. They didn't look as though they belonged. But the lamp was perfect. It seemed to smile at Kezia, to say, "I live here." The lamp was real.

The Burnell children could hardly walk to school fast

enough the next morning. They burned to tell everybody, to describe, to—well—to boast about their doll's house before the school-bell rang.

"I'm to tell," said Isabel, "because I'm the eldest. And you two can join in after. But I'm to tell first."

There was nothing to answer. Isabel was bossy, but she was always right, and Lottie and Kezia knew too well the powers that went with being eldest. They brushed through the thick buttercups at the road edge and said nothing.

"And I'm to choose who's to come and see it first. Mother said I might."

For it had been arranged that while the doll's house stood in the courtyard they might ask the girls at school, two at a time, to come and look. Not to stay to tea, of course, or to come traipsing through the house. But just to stand quietly in the courtyard while Isabel pointed out the beauties, and Lottie and Kezia looked pleased. . . .

But hurry as they might, by the time they had reached the tarred palings of the boys' playground the bell had begun to jangle. They only just had time to whip off their hats and fall into line before the roll was called. Never mind. Isabel tried to make up for it by looking very important and mysterious and by whispering behind her hand to the girls near her, "Got something to tell you at playtime."

Playtime came and Isabel was surrounded. The girls of her class nearly fought to put their arms round her, to walk away with her, to beam flatteringly, to be her special friend. She held quite a court under the huge pine trees at the side of the playground. Nudging, giggling together, the little girls pressed up close. And the only two who stayed outside the ring were the two who were always outside, the little Kelveys. They knew better than to come anywhere near the Burnells.

For the fact was, the school the Burnell children went to was not at all the kind of place their parents would have chosen if there had been any choice. But there was none. It was the only

school for miles. And the consequence was all the children in the neighborhood, the Judge's little girls, the doctor's daughters, the storekeeper's children, the milkman's, were forced to mix together. Not to speak of there being an equal number of rude, rough little boys as well. But the line had to be drawn somewhere. It was drawn at the Kelveys. Many of the children, including the Burnells, were not allowed even to speak to them. They walked past the Kelveys with their heads in the air, and as they set the fashion in all matters of behavior, the Kelveys were shunned by everybody. Even the teacher had a special voice for them, and a special smile for the other children when Lil Kelvey came up to her desk with a bunch of dreadfully common-looking flowers.

They were the daughters of a spry, hardworking little washerwoman, who went about from house to house by the day. This was awful enough. But where was Mr. Kelvey? Nobody knew for certain. But everybody said he was in prison. So they were the daughters of a washerwoman and a gaolbird. Very nice company for other people's children! And they looked it. Why Mrs. Kelvey made them so conspicuous was hard to understand. The truth was they were dressed in "bits" given to her by the people for whom she worked. Lil, for instance, who was a stout, plain child, with big freckles, came to school in a dress made from a green art-serge tablecloth of the Burnells', with red plush sleeves from the Logans' curtains. Her hat, perched on top of her high forehead, was a grown-up woman's hat, once the property of Miss Lecky, the postmistress. It was turned up at the back and trimmed with a large scarlet quill. What a little guy she looked! It was impossible not to laugh. And her little sister, our Else, wore a long white dress, rather like a nightgown, and a pair of little boy's boots. But whatever our Else wore she would have looked strange. She was a tiny wishbone of a child, with cropped hair and enormous solemn eyes—a little white owl. Nobody had ever seen her smile; she scarcely ever spoke. She went through life

holding on to Lil, with a piece of Lil's skirt screwed up in her hand. Where Lil went our Else followed. In the playground, on the road going to and from school, there was Lil marching in front and our Else holding on behind. Only when she wanted anything, or when she was out of breath, our Else gave Lil a tug, a twitch, and Lil stopped and turned round. The Kelveys never failed to understand each other.

Now they hovered at the edge; you couldn't stop them listening. When the little girls turned round and sneered, Lil, as usual, gave her silly, shamefaced smile, but our Else only looked.

And Isabel's voice, so very proud, went on telling. The carpet made a great sensation, but so did the beds with real bedclothes, and the stove with an oven door.

When she finished Kezia broke in. "You've forgotten the lamp, Isabel."

"Oh, yes," said Isabel, "and there's a teeny little lamp, all made of yellow glass, with a white globe that stands on the dining-room table. You couldn't tell it from a real one."

"The lamp's best of all," cried Kezia. She thought Isabel wasn't making half enough of the little lamp. But nobody paid any attention. Isabel was choosing the two who were to come back with them that afternoon and see it. She chose Emmie Cole and Lena Logan. But when the others knew they were all to have a chance, they couldn't be nice enough to Isabel. One by one they put their arms round Isabel's waist and walked her off. They had something to whisper to her, a secret. "Isabel's *my* friend."

Only the little Kelveys moved away forgotten; there was nothing more for them to hear.

Days passed, and as more children saw the doll's house, the fame of it spread. It became the one subject, the rage. The one question was, "Have you seen Burnells' doll's house? Oh, ain't it lovely!" "Haven't you seen it? Oh, I say!"

Even the dinner hour was given up to talking about it. The

little girls sat under the pines eating their thick mutton sandwiches and big slabs of johnnycake spread with butter. While always, as near as they could get, sat the Kelveys, our Else holding on to Lil, listening too, while they chewed their jam sandwiches out of a newspaper soaked with large red blobs. . . .

"Mother," said Kezia, "can't I ask the Kelveys just once?"

"Certainly not, Kezia."

"But why not?"

"Run away, Kezia; you know quite well why not."

At last everybody had seen it except them. On that day the subject rather flagged. It was the dinner hour. The children stood together under the pine trees, and suddenly, as they looked at the Kelveys eating out of their paper, always by themselves, always listening, they wanted to be horrid to them. Emmie Cole started the whisper.

"Lil Kelvey's going to be a servant when she grows up."

"O-oh, how awful!" said Isabel Burnell, and she made eyes at Emmie.

Emmie swallowed in a very meaning way and nodded to Isabel as she'd seen her mother do on those occasions.

"It's true—it's true—it's true," she said.

Then Lena Logan's little eyes snapped. "Shall I ask her?" she whispered.

"Bet you don't," said Jessie May.

"Pooh, I'm not frightened," said Lena. Suddenly she gave a little squeal and danced in front of the other girls. "Watch! Watch me! Watch me now!" said Lena. And sliding, gliding, dragging one foot, giggling behind her hand, Lena went over to the Kelveys.

Lil looked up from her dinner. She wrapped the rest quickly away. Our Else stopped chewing. What was coming now?

"Is it true you're going to be a servant when you grow up, Lil Kelvey?" shrilled Lena.

Dead silence. But instead of answering, Lil only gave her

silly, shamefaced smile. She didn't seem to mind the question at all. What a sell for Lena! The girls began to titter.

Lena couldn't stand that. She put her hands on her hips; she shot forward. "Yah, yer father's in prison!" she hissed, spitefully.

This was such a marvellous thing to have said that the little girls rushed away in a body, deeply, deeply excited, wild with joy. Some one found a long rope, and they began skipping. And never did they skip so high, run in and out so fast, or do such daring things as on that morning.

In the afternoon Pat called for the Burnell children with the buggy and they drove home. There were visitors. Isabel and Lottie, who liked visitors, went upstairs to change their pinafores. But Kezia thieved out at the back. Nobody was about; she began to swing on the big white gates of the courtyard. Presently, looking along the road, she saw two little dots. They grew bigger, they were coming towards her. Now she could see that one was in front and one close behind. Now she could see that they were the Kelveys. Kezia stopped swinging. She slipped off the gate as if she was going to run away. Then she hesitated. The Kelveys came nearer, and beside them walked their shadows, very long, stretching right across the road with their heads in the buttercups. Kezia clambered back on the gate; she had made up her mind; she swung out.

"Hullo," she said to the passing Kelveys.

They were so astounded that they stopped. Lil gave her silly smile. Our Else stared.

"You can come and see our doll's house if you want to," said Kezia, and she dragged one toe on the ground. But at that Lil turned red and shook her head quickly.

"Why not?" asked Kezia.

Lil gasped, then she said, "Your ma told our ma you wasn't to speak to us."

"Oh, well," said Kezia. She didn't know what to reply. "It doesn't matter. You can come and see our doll's house all the same. Come on. Nobody's looking."

But Lil shook her head still harder.

"Don't you want to?" asked Kezia.

Suddenly there was a twitch, a tug at Lil's skirt. She turned round. Our Else was looking at her with big, imploring eyes; she was frowning; she wanted to go. For a moment Lil looked at our Else very doubtfully. But then our Else twitched her skirt again. She started forward. Kezia led the way. Like two little stray cats they followed across the courtyard to where the doll's house stood.

"There it is," said Kezia.

There was a pause. Lil breathed loudly, almost snorted; our Else was still as a stone.

"I'll open it for you," said Kezia kindly. She undid the hook and they looked inside.

"There's the drawing room and the dining room, and that's the—"

"Kezia!"

Oh, what a start they gave!

"Kezia!"

It was Aunt Beryl's voice. They turned round. At the back door stood Aunt Beryl, staring as if she couldn't believe what she saw.

"How dare you ask the little Kelveys into the courtyard?" said her cold, furious voice. "You know as well as I do, you're not allowed to talk to them. Run away, children, run away at once. And don't come back again," said Aunt Beryl. And she stepped into the yard and shooed them out as if they were chickens.

"Off you go immediately!" she called, cold and proud.

They did not need telling twice. Burning with shame, shrinking together, Lil huddling along like her mother, our Else dazed, somehow they crossed the big courtyard and squeezed through the white gate.

"Wicked, disobedient little girl!" said Aunt Beryl bitterly to Kezia, and she slammed the doll's house to.

The afternoon had been awful. A letter had come from

Willie Brent, a terrifying, threatening letter, saying if she did not meet him that evening in Pulman's Bush, he'd come to the front door and ask the reason why! But now that she had frightened those little rats of Kelveys and given Kezia a good scolding, her heart felt lighter. That ghastly pressure was gone. She went back to the house humming.

When the Kelveys were well out of sight of Burnells', they sat down to rest on a big red drainpipe by the side of the road. Lil's cheeks were still burning; she took off the hat with the quill and held it on her knee. Dreamily they looked over the hay paddocks, past the creek, to the group of wattles where Logan's cows stood waiting to be milked. What were their thoughts?

Presently our Else nudged up close to her sister. But now she had forgotten the cross lady. She put out a finger and stroked her sister's quill; she smiled her rare smile.

"I seen the little lamp," she said, softly.

Then both were silent once more.

ANTON CHEKHOV

The Darling

OLENKA, THE DAUGHTER OF THE retired collegiate assessor, Plemyanniakov, was sitting in her back porch, lost in thought. It was hot, the flies were persistent and teasing, and it was pleasant to reflect that it would soon be evening. Dark rainclouds were gathering from the east, and bringing from time to time a breath of moisture in the air.

Kukin, who was the manager of an open-air theatre called the Tivoli, and who lived in the lodge, was standing in the middle of the garden looking at the sky.

"Again!" he observed despairingly. "It's going to rain again! Rain every day, as though to spite me. I might as well hang myself! It's ruin! Fearful losses every day."

He flung up his hands, and went on, addressing Olenka:

"There! that's the life we lead, Olga Semyonovna. It's enough to make one cry. One works and does one's utmost; one wears oneself out, getting no sleep at night, and racks one's brain what to do for the best. And then what happens? To begin with, one's public is ignorant, boorish. I give them the very best operetta, a dainty masque, first rate music-hall artists. But do you suppose that's what they want! They don't understand anything of that sort. They want a clown; what

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they ask for is vulgarity. And then look at the weather! Almost every evening it rains. It started on the tenth of May, and it's kept it up all May and June. It's simply awful! The public doesn't come, but I've to pay the rent just the same, and pay the artists."

The next evening the clouds would gather again, and Kukin would say with an hysterical laugh:

"Well, rain away, then! Flood the garden, drown me! Damn my luck in this world and the next! Let the artists have me up! Send me to prison!—to Siberia!—the scaffold! Ha, ha, ha!"

And next day the same thing.

Olenka listened to Kukin with silent gravity, and sometimes tears came into her eyes. In the end his misfortunes touched her; she grew to love him. He was a small thin man, with a yellow face, and curls combed forward on his forehead. He spoke in a thin tenor; as he talked his mouth worked on one side, and there was always an expression of despair on his face; yet he aroused a deep and genuine affection in her. She was always fond of some one, and could not exist without loving. In earlier days she had loved her papa, who now sat in a darkened room, breathing with difficulty; she had loved her aunt who used to come every other year from Bryansk; and before that, when she was at school, she had loved her French master. She was a gentle, soft-hearted, compassionate girl, with mild, tender eyes and very good health. At the sight of her full rosy cheeks, her soft white neck with a little dark mole on it, and the kind, naïve smile, which came into her face when she listened to anything pleasant, men thought, "Yes, not half bad," and smiled too, while lady visitors could not refrain from seizing her hand in the middle of a conversation, exclaiming in a gush of delight, "You darling!"

The house in which she had lived from her birth upwards, and which was left her in her father's will, was at the extreme end of the town, not far from the Tivoli. In the evenings and at

night she could hear the band playing, and the crackling and banging of fireworks, and it seemed to her that it was Kukin struggling with his destiny, storming the entrenchments of his chief foe, the indifferent public; there was a sweet thrill at her heart, she had no desire to sleep, and when he returned home at daybreak, she tapped softly at her bedroom window, and showing him only her face and one shoulder through the curtain, she gave him a friendly smile. . . .

He proposed to her, and they were married. And when he had a closer view of her neck and her plump, fine shoulders, he threw up his hands, and said:

"You darling!"

He was happy, but as it rained on the day and night of his wedding, his face still retained the expression of despair.

They got on very well together. She used to sit in his office, to look after things in the Tivoli, to put down the accounts and pay the wages. And her rosy cheeks, her sweet, naïve, radiant smile, were to be seen now at the office window, now in the refreshment bar or behind the scenes of the theatre. And already she used to say to her acquaintances that the theatre was the chief and most important thing in life, and that it was only through the drama that one could derive true enjoyment and become cultivated and humane.

"But do you suppose the public understands that?" she used to say. "What they want is a clown. Yesterday we gave 'Faust Inside Out,' and almost all the boxes were empty; but if Vanitchka and I had been producing some vulgar thing, I assure you the theatre would have been packed. To-morrow Vanitchka and I are doing 'Orpheus in Hell.' Do come."

And what Kukin said about the theatre and the actors she repeated. Like him she despised the public for their ignorance and their indifference to art; she took part in the rehearsals, she corrected the actors, she kept an eye on the behaviour of the musicians, and when there was an unfavourable notice in

the local paper, she shed tears, and then went to the editor's office to set things right.

The actors were fond of her and used to call her "Vanitchka and I," and "the darling"; and she was sorry for them and used to lend them small sums of money, and if they deceived her, she used to shed a few tears in private, but did not complain to her husband.

They got on well in the winter too. They took the theatre in the town for the whole winter, and let it for short terms to a Little Russian company, or to a conjurer, or to a local dramatic society. Olenka grew stouter, and was always beaming with satisfaction, while Kukin grew thinner and yellower, and continually complained of their terrible losses, although he had not done badly all the winter. He used to cough at night, and she used to give him hot raspberry tea or lime-flower water, to rub him with eau-de-Cologne and to wrap him in her warm shawls.

"You're such a sweet pet!" she used to say with perfect sincerity, stroking his hair. "You're such a pretty dear!"

Towards Lent he went to Moscow to collect a new troupe, and without him she could not sleep, but sat all night at her window, looking at the stars, and she compared herself with the hens, who are awake all night and uneasy when the cock is not in the hen-house. Kukin was detained in Moscow, and wrote that he would be back at Easter, adding some instructions about the Tivoli. But on the Sunday before Easter, late in the evening, came a sudden ominous knock at the gate; some one was hammering on the gate as though on a barrel—boom, boom, boom! The drowsy cook went flopping with her bare feet through the puddles, as she ran to open the gate.

"Please open," said some one outside in a thick bass. "There is a telegram for you."

Olenka had received telegrams from her husband before, but this time for some reason she felt numb with terror. With shaking hands she opened the telegram and read as follows:

"Ivan Petrovitch died suddenly to-day. Awaiting immate instructions fufuneral Tuesday."

That was how it was written in the telegram—"fufuneral," and the utterly incomprehensible word "immate." It was signed by the stage manager of the operatic company.

"My darling!" sobbed Olenka. "Vanitchka, my precious, my darling! Why did I ever meet you! Why did I know you and love you! Your poor heart-broken Olenka is all alone without you!"

Kukin's funeral took place on Tuesday in Moscow, Olenka returned home on Wednesday, and as soon as she got indoors she threw herself on her bed and sobbed so loudly that it could be heard next door, and in the street.

"Poor darling!" the neighbours said, as they crossed themselves. "Olga Semyonovna, poor darling! How she does take on!"

Three months later Olenka was coming home from mass, melancholy and in deep mourning. It happened that one of her neighbours, Vassily Andreitch Pustovalov, returning home from church, walked back beside her. He was the manager at Babakayev's, the timber merchant's. He wore a straw hat, a white waistcoat, and a gold watch-chain, and looked more like a country gentleman than a man in trade.

"Everything happens as it is ordained, Olga Semyonovna," he said gravely, with a sympathetic note in his voice; "and if any of our dear ones die, it must be because it is the will of God, so we ought to have fortitude and bear it submissively."

After seeing Olenka to her gate, he said good-bye and went on. All day afterwards she heard his sedately dignified voice, and whenever she shut her eyes she saw his dark beard. She liked him very much. And apparently she had made an impression on him too, for not long afterwards an elderly lady, with whom she was only slightly acquainted, came to drink coffee with her, and as soon as she was seated at table began to

talk about Pustovalov, saying that he was an excellent man whom one could thoroughly depend upon, and that any girl would be glad to marry him. Three days later Pustovalov came himself. He did not stay long, only about ten minutes, and he did not say much, but when he left, Olenka loved him—loved him so much that she lay awake all night in a perfect fever, and in the morning she sent for the elderly lady. The match was quickly arranged, and then came the wedding.

Pustovalov and Olenka got on very well together when they were married.

Usually he sat in the office till dinner-time, then he went out on business, while Olenka took his place, and sat in the office till evening, making up accounts and booking orders.

"Timber gets dearer every year; the price rises twenty per cent," she would say to her customers and friends. "Only fancy we used to sell local timber, and now Vassitchka always has to go for wood to the Mogilev district. And the freight!" she would add, covering her cheeks with her hands in horror. "The freight!"

It seemed to her that she had been in the timber trade for ages and ages, and that the most important and necessary thing in life was timber; and there was something intimate and touching to her in the very sound of words such as "baulk," "post," "beam," "pole," "scantling," "batten," "lath," "plank," etc.

At night when she was asleep she dreamed of perfect mountains of planks and boards, and long strings of wagons, carting timber somewhere far away. She dreamed that a whole regiment of six-inch beams forty feet high, standing on end, was marching upon the timber-yard; that logs, beams, and boards knocked together with the resounding crash of dry wood, kept falling and getting up again, piling themselves on each other. Olenka cried out in her sleep, and Pustovalov said to her tenderly: "Olenka, what's the matter, darling? Cross yourself!"

Her husband's ideas were hers. If he thought the room was

too hot, or that business was slack, she thought the same. Her husband did not care for entertainments, and on holidays he stayed at home. She did likewise.

"You are always at home or in the office," her friends said to her. "You should go to the theatre, darling, or to the circus."

"Vassitchka and I have no time to go to theatres," she would answer sedately. "We have no time for nonsense. What's the use of these theatres?"

On Saturdays Pustovalov and she used to go to the evening service; on holidays to early mass, and they walked side by side with softened faces as they came home from church. There was a pleasant fragrance about them both, and her silk dress rustled agreeably. At home they drank tea, with fancy bread and jams of various kinds, and afterwards they ate pie. Every day at twelve o'clock there was a savoury smell of beet-root soup and of mutton or duck in their yard, and on fast-days of fish, and no one could pass the gate without feeling hungry. In the office the samovar was always boiling, and customers were regaled with tea and cracknels. Once a week the couple went to the baths and returned side by side, both red in the face.

"Yes, we have nothing to complain of, thank God," Olenka used to say to her acquaintances. "I wish every one were as well off as Vassitchka and I."

When Pustovalov went away to buy wood in the Mogilev district, she missed him dreadfully, lay awake and cried. A young veterinary surgeon in the army, called Smirnin, to whom they had let their lodge, used sometimes to come in in the evening. He used to talk to her and play cards with her, and this entertained her in her husband's absence. She was particularly interested in what he told her of his home life. He was married and had a little boy, but was separated from his wife because she had been unfaithful to him, and now he hated her and used to send her forty roubles a month for the maintenance of their son. And hearing of all this, Olenka sighed and shook her head. She was sorry for him.

"Well, God keep you," she used to say to him at parting, as she lighted him down the stairs with a candle. "Thank you for coming to cheer me up, and may the Mother of God give you health."

And she always expressed herself with the same sedateness and dignity, the same reasonableness, in imitation of her husband. As the veterinary surgeon was disappearing behind the door below, she would say:

"You know, Vladimir Platonitch, you'd better make it up with your wife. You should forgive her for the sake of your son. You may be sure the little fellow understands."

And when Pustovalov came back, she told him in a low voice about the veterinary surgeon and his unhappy home life, and both sighed and shook their heads and talked about the boy, who, no doubt, missed his father, and by some strange connection of ideas, they went up to the holy ikons, bowed to the ground before them and prayed that God would give them children.

And so the Pustovalovs lived for six years quietly and peaceably in love and complete harmony.

But behold! one winter day after drinking hot tea in the office, Vassily Andreitch went out into the yard without his cap on to see about sending off some timber, caught cold and was taken ill. He had the best doctors, but he grew worse and died after four months' illness. And Olenka was a widow once more.

"I've nobody, now you've left me, my darling," she sobbed, after her husband's funeral. "How can I live without you, in wretchedness and misery! Pity me, good people, all alone in the world!"

She went about dressed in black with long "weepers," and gave up wearing hat and gloves for good. She hardly ever went out, except to church, or to her husband's grave, and led the life of a nun. It was not till six months later that she took off the weepers and opened the shutters of the windows. She was

sometimes seen in the mornings, going with her cook to market for provisions, but what went on in her house and how she lived now could only be surmised. People guessed, from seeing her drinking tea in her garden with the veterinary surgeon, who read the newspaper aloud to her, and from the fact that, meeting a lady she knew at the post-office, she said to her:

"There is no proper veterinary inspection in our town, and that's the cause of all sorts of epidemics. One is always hearing of people's getting infection from the milk supply, or catching diseases from horses and cows. The health of domestic animals ought to be as well cared for as the health of human beings!"

She repeated the veterinary surgeon's words, and was of the same opinion as he about everything. It was evident that she could not live a year without some attachment, and had found new happiness in the lodge. In any one else this would have been censured, but no one could think ill of Olenka; everything she did was so natural. Neither she nor the veterinary surgeon said anything to other people of the change in their relations, and tried, indeed, to conceal it, but without success, for Olenka could not keep a secret. When he had visitors, men serving in his regiment, and she poured out tea or served the supper, she would begin talking of the cattle plague, of the foot and mouth disease, and of the municipal slaughter-houses. He was dreadfully embarrassed, and when the guests had gone, he would seize her by the hand and hiss angrily:

"I've asked you before not to talk about what you don't understand. When we veterinary surgeons are talking among ourselves, please don't put your word in. It's really annoying."

And she would look at him with astonishment and dismay, and ask him in alarm: "But, Voloditchka, what *am* I to talk about?"

And with tears in her eyes she would embrace him, begging him not to be angry, and they were both happy.

But this happiness did not last long. The veterinary surgeon departed, departed for ever with his regiment, when it was

transferred to a distant place—to Siberia, it may be. And Olenka was left alone.

Now she was absolutely alone. Her father had long been dead, and his armchair lay in the attic, covered with dust and lame of one leg. She got thinner and plainer, and when people met her in the street they did not look at her as they used to, and did not smile to her; evidently her best years were over and behind, and now a new sort of life had begun for her, which did not bear thinking about. In the evening Olenka sat in the porch, and heard the band playing and the fireworks popping in the Tivoli, but now the sound stirred no response. She looked into her yard without interest, thought of nothing, wished for nothing, and afterwards, when night came on she went to bed and dreamed of her empty yard. She ate and drank as it were unwillingly.

And what was worst of all, she had no opinions of any sort. She saw the objects about her and understood what she saw, but could not form any opinion about them, and did not know what to talk about. And how awful it is not to have any opinions! One sees a bottle, for instance, or the rain, or a peasant driving in his cart, but what the bottle is for, or the rain, or the peasant, and what is the meaning of it, one can't say, and could not even for a thousand roubles. When she had Kukin, or Pustovalov, or the veterinary surgeon, Olenka could explain everything, and give her opinion about anything you like, but now there was the same emptiness in her brain and in her heart as there was in her yard outside. And it was as harsh and as bitter as wormwood in the mouth.

Little by little the town grew in all directions. The road became a street, and where the Tivoli and the timber-yard had been, there were new turnings and houses. How rapidly time passes! Olenka's house grew dingy, the roof got rusty, the shed sank on one side, and the whole yard was overgrown with docks and stinging-nettles. Olenka herself had grown plain and elderly; in summer she sat in the porch, and her soul, as before, was empty and dreary and full of bitterness. In winter

she sat at her window and looked at the snow. When she caught the scent of spring, or heard the chime of the church bells, a sudden rush of memories from the past came over her, there was a tender ache in her heart, and her eyes brimmed over with tears; but this was only for a minute, and then came emptiness again and the sense of the futility of life. The black kitten, Briska, rubbed against her and purred softly, but Olenka was not touched by these feline caresses. That was not what she needed. She wanted a love that would absorb her whole being, her whole soul and reason—that would give her ideas and an object in life, and would warm her old blood. And she would shake the kitten off her skirt and say with vexation:

"Get along; I don't want you!"

And so it was, day after day and year after year, and no joy, and no opinions. Whatever Mavra, the cook, said she accepted.

One hot July day, towards evening, just as the cattle were being driven away, and the whole yard was full of dust, some one suddenly knocked at the gate. Olenka went to open it herself and was dumbfounded when she looked out: she saw Smirnin, the veterinary surgeon, grey-headed, and dressed as a civilian. She suddenly remembered everything. She could not help crying and letting her head fall on his breast without uttering a word, and in the violence of her feeling she did not notice how they both walked into the house and sat down to tea.

"My dear Vladimir Platonitch! What fate has brought you?" she muttered, trembling with joy.

"I want to settle here for good, Olga Semyonovna," he told her. "I have resigned my post, and have come to settle down and try my luck on my own account. Besides, it's time for my boy to go to school. He's a big boy. I am reconciled with my wife, you know."

"Where is she?" asked Olenka.

"She's at the hotel with the boy, and I'm looking for lodgings."

"Good gracious, my dear soul! Lodgings? Why not have my

house? Why shouldn't that suit you? Why, my goodness, I wouldn't take any rent!" cried Olenka, in a flutter, beginning to cry again. "You live here, and the lodge will do nicely for me. Oh dear! how glad I am!"

Next day the roof was painted and the walls were white-washed, and Olenka, with her arms akimbo, walked about the yard giving directions. Her face was beaming with her old smile, and she was brisk and alert as though she had waked from a long sleep. The veterinary's wife arrived—a thin, plain lady, with short hair and a peevish expression. With her was little Sasha, a boy of ten, small for his age, blue-eyed, chubby, with dimples in his cheeks. And scarcely had the boy walked into the yard when he ran after the cat, and at once there was the sound of his gay, joyous laugh.

"Is that your puss, auntie?" he asked Olenka. "When she has little ones, do give us a kitten. Mamma is awfully afraid of mice."

Olenka talked to him, and gave him tea. Her heart warmed and there was a sweet ache in her bosom, as though the boy had been her own child. And when he sat at the table in the evening, going over his lessons, she looked at him with deep tenderness and pity as she murmured to herself:

"You pretty pet! . . . my precious! . . . Such a fair little thing, and so clever."

" 'An island is a piece of land which is entirely surrounded by water,' " he read aloud.

"An island is a piece of land," she repeated, and this was the first opinion to which she gave utterance with positive conviction after so many years of silence and dearth of ideas.

Now she had opinions of her own, and at supper she talked to Sasha's parents, saying how difficult the lessons were at the high-schools, but that yet the high-school was better than a commercial one, since with a high-school education all careers were open to one, such as being a doctor or an engineer.

Sasha began going to the high-school. His mother departed

to Harkov to her sister's and did not return; his father used to go off every day to inspect cattle, and would often be away from home for three days together, and it seemed to Olenka as though Sasha was entirely abandoned, that he was not wanted at home, that he was being starved, and she carried him off to her lodge and gave him a little room there.

And for six months Sasha had lived in the lodge with her. Every morning Olenka came into his bedroom and found him fast asleep, sleeping noiselessly with his hand under his cheek. She was sorry to wake him.

"Sashenka," she would say mournfully, "get up, darling. It's time for school."

He would get up, dress and say his prayers, and then sit down to breakfast, drink three glasses of tea, and eat two large cracknels and half a buttered roll. All this time he was hardly awake and a little ill-humoured in consequence.

"You don't quite know your fable, Sashenka," Olenka would say, looking at him as though he were about to set off on a long journey. "What a lot of trouble I have with you! You must work and do your best, darling, and obey your teachers."

"Oh, do leave me alone!" Sasha would say.

Then he would go down the street to school, a little figure, wearing a big cap and carrying a satchel on his shoulder. Olenka would follow him noiselessly.

"Sashenka!" she would call after him, and she would pop into his hand a date or a caramel. When he reached the street where the school was, he would feel ashamed of being followed by a tall, stout woman; he would turn round and say:

"You'd better go home, auntie. I can go the rest of the way alone."

She would stand still and look after him fixedly till he had disappeared at the school-gate.

Ah, how she loved him! Of her former attachments not one had been so deep; never had her soul surrendered to any feeling so spontaneously, so disinterestedly, and so joyously as

now that her maternal instincts were aroused. For this little boy with the dimple in his cheek and the big school cap, she would have given her whole life, she would have given it with joy and tears of tenderness. Why? Who can tell why?

When she had seen the last of Sasha, she returned home, contented and serene, brimming over with love; her face, which had grown younger during the last six months, smiled and beamed; people meeting her looked at her with pleasure.

"Good-morning, Ola Semyonovna, darling. How are you, darling?"

"The lessons at the high-school are very difficult now," she would relate at the market. "It's too much; in the first class yesterday they gave him a fable to learn by heart, and a Latin translation and a problem. You know it's too much for a little chap."

And she would begin talking about the teachers, the lessons, and the school books, saying just what Sasha said.

At three o'clock they had dinner together: in the evening they learned their lessons together and cried. When she put him to bed, she would stay a long time making the Cross over him and murmuring a prayer; then she would go to bed and dream of that far-away misty future when Sasha would finish his studies and become a doctor or an engineer, would have a big house of his own with horses and a carriage, would get married and have children. . . . She would fall asleep still thinking of the same thing, and tears would run down her cheeks from her closed eyes, while the black cat lay purring beside her: "Mrr, mrr, mrr."

Suddenly there would come a loud knock at the gate.

Olenka would wake up breathless with alarm, her heart throbbing. Half a minute later would come another knock.

"It must be a telegram from Harkov," she would think, beginning to tremble from head to foot. "Sasha's mother is sending for him from Harkov. . . . Oh, mercy on us!"

She was in despair. Her head, her hands, and her feet would

turn chill, and she would feel that she was the most unhappy woman in the world. But another minute would pass, voices would be heard: it would turn out to be the veterinary surgeon coming home from the club.

"Well, thank God!" she would think.

And gradually the load in her heart would pass off, and she would feel at ease. She would go back to bed thinking of Sasha, who lay sound asleep in the next room, sometimes crying out in his sleep:

"I'll give it you! Get away! Shut up!"

SHERWOOD ANDERSON

What Makes a Boy Afraid

»» When Tar Moorehead was sick that time there was an old man, a doctor, used to come to the house. He had a good deal to do with straightening the Mooreheads out. What was wrong with Tar's mother, Mary, was that she was almost too good.

If you are too good you think—"Well now, I'll be patient and kind. I won't scold, whatever happens." In the saloons sometimes when Tar's father, Dick, was spending money he should have taken home he heard other men speaking of their wives. Most men are afraid of their wives.

A man in the saloon used to say things. "I don't want the old woman on my neck." That was just a way of speaking. He meant he would get Hail Columbia when he got home and Dick Moorehead never got Hail Columbia. Dr. Reefy said he should get it sometimes.

In the Moorehead house things changed, got better. Not that Dick became good. Well, no one expected that.

Dick stayed more at home, brought more of his money home. Neighbors came in more. Dick could tell his war stories on the front porch in the presence of neighbor men, a drayman, a man who was section boss on the Wheeling railroad.

Tar's mother had a way she always kept, of knocking the

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props out from under people sometimes with little side remarks but she held herself back more and more. There are some people that when they smile make the whole house smile. When they freeze up every one around freezes up. Robert Moorehead got to be a good deal like his mother when he grew older. John was the steady one. The youngest one of all, little Will Moorehead, was to be the artist of the family. Later he was what people call a genius and had a hard time making a living.

After his childhood was over and after she had died Tar thought his mother must have been smart. He was in love with her all his life. It may be that you are most likely to love some one you can't possibly be like. After Dr. Reefy began coming to the Moorehead house Mary Moorehead changed but not so much. She went to the children's room after they had gone to bed and kissed them all. She was like a young girl about it, did not seem able to caress them in the daylight. None of her children ever saw her kiss Dick and the sight would have startled them.

If you have a mother like Mary Moorehead and she is lovely to look at—or you think she is, which is the same thing—and she dies when you are young, what you do all your life afterward is to use her as material for dreams. It is unfair to her but you do it.

Very likely you make her sweeter than she was, kinder than she was, wiser than she was. What's the harm?

You are always wanting some one almost perfect to think about because you know that you can't be that way yourself. If you ever do try you give up after a time.

Tar's mother was sick. John Moorehead had taken a job in a factory and Tar was selling papers. The mother's illness was not thought very alarming. Yet it was. She worked as always but often when she was cooking or washing clothes she had to quit suddenly and go sit in a chair. She sat with her eyes closed or if she opened them there was such a queer far-away

look. It made you sick to see it. Well, if one of the children happened to be in the house she managed to smile. "It isn't anything. I'll be all right in a minute."

That sort of talk from the mother. Tar's father was seldom at home. Dr. Reefy came to the house and said nothing. Children cannot get information out of a doctor.

Tar went selling his papers. John now seemed almost a man. Margaret wasn't big but she had seemed to get older all of a sudden.

One evening when Tar had been busy distributing papers he went home late and there were his father and mother in their bedroom. He was barefooted and so they did not hear him when he went around the house and the window was open. There was a lamp burning and Dick was talking while his wife lay in bed listening and looking very tired and worn out.

What gave Tar the willies was that Dick wasn't talking about anything important. He had been in some sort of discussion with some man downtown and had got the best of it, or thought he had. What did it matter? It was about the war of course. . . . A lot of people killed in a battle, away off somewheres long ago. Who was to blame? Well, they're dead, eh? Maybe Tar's mother was being killed now—talked to death maybe. It might even be that Dick did not know how pale and worn she looked. You get all indignant inside but what are you going to do?

Tar marched in and told his mother she had better go to sleep. He hadn't exactly told Dick to shut up but that was what he meant and Dick understood. "You look tired, Mother. You'd better go to sleep." If you say words like that, what you are really doing is to say to your own father, "Shut up now and let Mother sleep." It's hard. The words hurt your throat and you want to cry but you don't. You don't really blame Dick, he's what he is—can't help it. Give him a chance and he will

understand. "Sure, you're right. Mother does look rather worn out," he says. He hadn't noticed before.

After that happened Tar went upstairs and to bed. The trouble with him was that when he did any little thing like that it made him tremble all over. He felt as he did that time when he butted Henry Fuller off the bridge.

He went selling papers and thinking. Now he was thirteen years old and getting big. He still went to Tom Whitehead's stable and stood about listening to the men. The little incident with his father had made him look at men more closely, listen more closely to their talk.

In a town there are certain men other men always speak of as "well-informed." It means they know a lot, have been to a lot of places, read a lot of books. Will Truesdale was a well-informed man but not so much so as Judge Blair. It was because the judge had traveled in foreign places and Will had not.

Once Judge Blair took Tar for a walk. It did not take very long. Tar was at Tom Whitehead's stable when the judge came in and none of the others were there. There were only the stablemen and the judge never paid any attention to them.

"Come on, young man," the judge said, addressing Tar as if he were a grown man. It was just as if he had said, "Well, come on. I want company and you'll have to do." Tar could have taken it as a compliment if he had wanted to but he didn't. He thought he would have been a fool if he had.

Tar and the judge walked down by Waterworks Pond. It was an odd affair, that walk. If the judge had wanted to talk with Tar he changed his mind. They just walked down to Waterworks Pond and stayed for a time watching the fish swim around. There was a swarm of minnows in near the shore and the judge poked his cane down among them. They would all light out into the deep water and then when he took his cane out would come back. Maybe the judge had wanted

to talk to Tar about his mother but when it came right down to it hadn't the nerve. What you find out later is that if kids are afraid of grown people sometimes grown people are afraid of kids too. They are afraid to hurt them, maybe. Kids can stand more than grown people think they can.

Anyway it was a queer way for the judge to act—taking Tar away from the stable that way and then not talking to him. He poked his stick in among the minnows several times and then turned to Tar and said, "Well, boy," he said, "I expect you want to run and play." After he said it he just stood looking out over the pond and Tar made a sneak. There wasn't anything else to do he could think of at the time.

Tar's father was what he was. He could not help it. Dr. Reefy liked and respected Tar's mother and he liked Dick, but not in the same way. If he came to the house and Dick was there he acted something like Judge Blair that time he took Tar for a walk. It wasn't exactly looking down on Dick, that wasn't the point. He acted a little (not knowing it) as if he and Mary Moorehead were grown people and Dick only a boy.

If Mary Moorehead had been a man—well, Tar knew she would have been Dr. Reefy's friend, Will Truesdale's friend, Judge Blair's friend, maybe.

What makes a boy more afraid than anything is something happening to his mother. It's a thing he doesn't dare to think about but Tar had to.

He had been noticing things. Nowadays Mary Moorehead went around the house the same as she always did and of course she was always at work but she was pale. Sometimes when she was at work—maybe she was ironing or getting supper—she stopped suddenly and went to sit in a chair. If you asked her if there was anything the matter she said no. Dick Moorehead was being pretty steady and brought more money home than he used to and John's earnings with Tar's, selling newspapers and other jobs, helped a lot but things cost

more all the time. Mary Moorehead had begun to take in washing and ironing. Tar and Margaret went and got the clothes and took them home, usually in the evening after dark, and there was something—Tar did not know why it was true—they never spoke of it. . . . Well, they were both a little ashamed—for Dick maybe.

No one would have dared say it to Mary Moorehead. She would have taken his head off. Maybe there are a lot of things in every family no one dares say, even to others in the family.

It's fun having a dad who can tell stories and all that but . . .

Why do you feel some men are solid and others as wobbly as calves?

When Mary Moorehead got pale that way it made Tar all shivery inside. A cold place came that would not get warm. She just sat in the chair awhile and there was a funny gone look in her eyes and if any of the children were around she managed to laugh. It had never happened when Dick was at home. He was away a lot. "Liked to be away," Tar thought.

Tar's mother had that funny gone look in her eyes and she was gentle as she never used to be. Nowadays she did not caress the children any more than she ever did but sometimes when they were in the house with her they felt her looking at them and when one of them turned around and faced her there was something in her eyes. It was as if she saw them in danger of some kind and did not know what to do about it.

Was Tar's mother trying to say something to him and the others at home, something she dared not put into words? Things going on in a family and no one letting on. A father maybe who all his life has been fooling himself. Sometimes nowadays Tar could sit at home and feel all right. He could tell himself that the secret fears he had were not true.

At night after dark was the worst. If you went upstairs and to bed with John and Robert you couldn't say a word.

Ghostly fears, little creeping fears.

There isn't anything to make you afraid but something terrible happening. You don't dare think about it but such a creepy feeling comes. It makes you want to crawl close to something solid, something maybe you can hold onto a bit.

Tar had the feeling one evening going home from his paper-selling and went and crept into the yard of Judge Blair's house and concealed himself under a bush to be near a man who, if trouble came, might be of help to himself and the others.

Nothing happened. The judge was in the library reading a book. After a time Dr. Reefy came. The two men talked for half an hour and then came out to the porch. From where he lay concealed by a bush Tar might have reached out and touched them with his hands.

The two men stood together a moment looking at the stars, and Judge Blair put his arm on Dr. Reefy's shoulder. Then in a moment Dr. Reefy went away.

Tar also went. He went home. When he got there he did not go in at once.

Creeping around the house he went to the window of his mother's room. It was all dark inside. It was early, but nowadays his mother always went to bed early and, to keep the house quiet, so did the children.

Tar thought his mother might be in her bed, asleep and all right.

But on the other hand she might be—

Why nowadays did Tar always have the feeling something dreadful was about to happen?

He crept indoors and upstairs to his room.

How very silent the house was. John was out somewhere and had not yet come home.

Margaret was in her room.

When Tar got into bed he lay on his back and closed his

eyes and when he opened them the walls, the ceiling, the floor of the room in which he lay all seemed to have floated away.

It was like that time when he was sick. Everything floated away from him. If there were only some one now he could get hold of. If only his father, Dick Moorehead, were more like Dr. Reefy or Judge Blair—well, not always but now and then. If even Margaret were more grown up.

Tar lay for a long time in the bed like that, the house silent, that queer feeling of being isolated from every living thing in the world playing over him like a wind.

It was a feeling he would have to fight all his life. Maybe all people have to fight it a good deal.

It was a thing that almost made him want to die while it lasted and it was on him often just before his mother's death, but being a boy with a boy's body and spending the day as he did out of doors the blessing was that when the feeling was worst the good angel of sleep came and passed her hand over his eyes.

The coming of death to Tar's mother was without special dramatic interest. She died in the night and only Dr. Reefy was in the room with her. There was no deathbed scene, the husband and children gathered about, a few last courageous words, a struggle and then the soul taking flight. For a long time Dr. Reefy had been expecting her death and was not surprised. Having been summoned to the house and the children having been sent upstairs to bed he sat down to talk with Mary Moorehead.

There were words said that Tar lying awake in a room above could not hear. As he afterward became a writer he often reconstructed in his imagination the scene in the room below. Well, there had always been some kind of understanding between Dr. Reefy and his mother. The man never became his own friend, never talked intimately to him as Judge Blair did

later, but he liked to think that the last talk of the man and woman in the little frame house in the Ohio town was full of significance to them both.

Voices in a room downstairs in a small frame house. Dick Moorehead, the husband, was away in the country on a painting job. What do two grown people talk about at such a time? The man and woman in the room below now and then laughed softly. After the doctor had been there for some time Mary Moorehead went quietly to sleep and died in her sleep.

The doctor did not awaken the children but went out of the house and got a neighbor to drive off to the country for Dick and then, coming back, sat down.

Mary Moorehead died during a night in the fall. Tar was then selling papers and John had gone to the factory. When Tar got home in the early evening his mother was not at table and Margaret said she was not feeling well. It was raining outside. The children ate in silence, the depression that always came with one of Mother's bad times hanging over them. Depression is something on which the imagination also feeds. When the meal was over Tar helped Margaret wash the dishes.

The children sat around. The mother had said she did not want anything to eat. John, who had just begun his work at the factory, went off early to bed and so also did Robert and Will.

Neither Tar nor Margaret was a bit sleepy. Margaret made the others go upstairs softly so as not to disturb the mother—if she was asleep. The two children got their school lessons, then Margaret and Tar got out the dominoes.

When Mary Moorehead was having one of her bad times she breathed irregularly. Her bedroom was right next the kitchen and at the front of the house was the parlor where the funeral was afterward held. When you wanted to go upstairs to bed you had to go right into the mother's bedroom but

there was an offset in the wall and if you were careful you could go up without being seen. Mary Moorehead's bad times were coming more and more regularly now. You almost got used to them. When Margaret had got home from school the mother was in bed and looking very pale and weak and Margaret wanted to send Robert off for the doctor at once but the mother said, "Not yet."

A grown person like that, and your mother . . . when they say "no" what are you going to do?

Now and then either Margaret or Tar went to put a stick of wood in the stove. Outside the house it rained and the wind came in through a crack under the door. There were always holes like that in the houses the Mooreheads lived in. You could throw a cat through the cracks. In the winter Mary Moorehead and John went around and nailed strips of wood and pieces of cloth over the cracks. It kept out some of the cold.

Time passed, perhaps an hour. It seemed longer. The fears Tar had been having for a year John and Margaret also had. You go along thinking you are the only one who thinks and feels things but if you do you're a fool. Others are thinking the same thoughts.

All of a sudden, that night when Mary Moorehead died, Margaret did something. As Margaret and Tar sat playing dominoes they could hear the mother's breathing in the next room. It was soft and irregular. Margaret got up in the middle of a game and tiptoed softly into the next room. She stayed there awhile, hidden so the mother couldn't see, then she came back into the kitchen and made a sign to Tar.

She had got all worked up just sitting there. That was it.

It was raining outside and her coat and hat were upstairs but she did not go up. Tar wanted her to take his cap but she wouldn't.

The two children got outside the house and Tar knew at

once what was up. They went along the street to Dr. Reefy's office without saying a word to each other.

Dr. Reefy wasn't there. There was a slate on the door and on it was written, "Back at ten o'clock." It might have been there for two or three days. A doctor like that, who hadn't much practice and didn't want much, was pretty careless.

"He might be at Judge Blair's," Tar said and they went there.

On a night like that when you are afraid something is going to happen what you do is to remember other times when you were scared and everything turned out all right. It is the best way.

On a night like that, when you are going for the doctor and your mother is going to die although you don't know it yet, other people you meet in the street go along just as they always do.

Margaret and Tar got to Judge Blair's house and sure enough the doctor was there. It was warm and bright inside but they did not go in. The judge came to the door and Margaret said, "Tell the doctor please that mother's sick," and she had hardly got the words said when out the doctor came. He went right along with the two children and when they were leaving the judge's house the judge came out and patted Tar on the back. "You're soaked," he said. He never spoke to Margaret at all.

The children took the doctor home with them and then went upstairs. They wanted to pretend to the mother that the doctor had just come by accident—to make a call.

They went up the stairs as softly as they could and when Tar got into the room where he slept with John and Robert he undressed and got into dry clothes. He put on his Sunday suit. It was the only one he had that was dry.

Downstairs he could hear his mother and the doctor talking. He did not know that the doctor was telling his mother

about the trip in the rain. What happened was that Dr. Reefy came to the foot of the stairs and called him down. No doubt he intended to call both children. He made a little whistling sound and Margaret came out of her room dressed in dry clothes just as Tar was. She also had to put on her best clothes. None of the other children heard them at all.

They went down and stood by the bed and their mother talked a little. "I'm all right. Nothing's going to happen. Don't worry," she said. She meant it too. She must have thought she was all right up to the last. It was a good thing, if she had to go, that she could go like that, just slip off during her sleep.

She said she would not die but she did. When she had spoken a few words to the children they went back upstairs but for a long time Tar did not sleep. Neither did Margaret. Tar never asked her afterward but he knew she didn't.

That night, now and then, Tar thought he heard his mother and the doctor talking. He couldn't just tell. It might only have been the wind outside the house. Once he was quite sure he heard the doctor run across the kitchen floor. Then he thought he heard a door open and close softly.

The worst of all for Tar and Margaret and John and all of them was the next day and the next and the next. A house full of people, a sermon to be preached, the man coming with the coffin, the trip to the graveyard. Margaret got out of it the best. She worked around the house. They couldn't make her stop. A woman said, "No, let me do it," but Margaret did not answer. She was white and kept her lips tightly closed together. She went and did it herself.

People came to the house Tar had never seen, worlds of people.

The queerest thing was what happened to Tar on the day after the burial.

He was going along a street, coming from school. School was out at four and the train with his papers did not come until after five. He was going along the street and had got to the

vacant lot by the Wilder's barn and there, in the lot, were some of the kids playing ball. Clark Wilder was there and the Richmond kid and a lot of others. When your mother dies you do not play ball for a long, long time. It isn't showing the proper respect. Tar knew that. The others knew it too.

Tar did stop. The queer thing that happened was that he played ball that day just as if nothing had happened. Well, not like that either. He never intended to play at all. What he did surprised him and the others. Of course they all knew about the death of his mother.

The boys were playing three-old-cat and Bob Mann was pitching. He had an out-curve and an in-shoot and a lot of speed for a twelve-year-old.

Tar just climbed over the fence and walked across the field and right up to the batter and took the bat out of his hand. At any other time there would have been a row over his doing that. When you play three-old-cat first you have to field, then hold base, then pitch, then catch before you can bat.

Tar didn't care. He took the bat out of Clark Wilder's hands and stood up at the plate. He began to taunt Bob Mann. "Let's see you put her over. Let's see what you got."

Bob threw one and then another and Tar soaked the second one. It was a home run and when he got around the bases he took the bat right up and soaked another, although it wasn't his turn. The others let him. They never said a word.

Tar yelled, he taunted the others, he acted crazy but nobody cared. When he had kept it up for maybe ten minutes he left just as suddenly as he had come.

He went, after he had acted like that on the very day after his mother's funeral, down to the depot. Well, the train wasn't in.

There were some empty box cars on a railroad siding over by Sid Gray's elevator near the depot and going over there he crawled into one of the cars.

At first he thought he would like to be in a car like that and be carried away, he didn't care where, and then he thought of something else. The cars were to have grain loaded in them. They stood right near the elevator and also near a shed in which there was an old blind horse that went round and round in a circle and kept the machinery going that lifted the grain up to the top of the building.

The grain was lifted up and then run down through a shoot. They could fill a car in just a little while. All they had to do was to pull a lever and down the grain came.

It would be nice, Tar thought, to lie still in the car and be buried under the grain. It wouldn't be like being buried under the ground. Grain was nice stuff; it felt nice in the hand. It was golden yellow stuff and would run down like rain and would bury you deep down where you could not breathe and you would die.

For what seemed to him a long time he lay on the floor of the car thinking of such a death for himself and then, rolling over on his side, he saw the old horse in his shed. The horse was looking out at him with blind eyes.

Tar looked at the horse and the horse looked at him. He heard the train that had brought his papers come in but did not stir. Now he was crying so that he was himself almost blind. It was as well, he thought, to do his crying where none of the other Moorehead children and none of the kids around town could see. The Moorehead children all felt something like that. At such a time you can't go making a show of yourself.

Tar lay in the car until the train came and went and then, drying his eyes, crawled out.

The people who had been down to meet the train were walking away up the street. Now in the Moorehead house Margaret would be home from school and would be doing her housework. John was at the factory. It was no special fun for John but he stuck to his job just the same.

As for the people walking away up the street—it might be that some of them would be wanting a paper.

A kid if he is any good has to be tending up to his job. He has to get up a hustle. It is a good thing he can't be blubbering away his time lying in an empty box car. What he has to do is bring into the family all the money he can. Heavens knows they need it all. He has got to tend up to his job.

These the thoughts in Tar Moorehead's head as he grabbed his bundle of newspapers and wiping his eyes on the back of his hand raced away up the street.

Although he did not know it Tar was at that very moment racing away out of childhood. Who knows when one thing ends and another begins?

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

The Story About the Anteater

THE YOUNGER CHILD SAT BOLT upright, her bedclothes wrapped around her.

"If you're going down to look at them," she whispered accusingly, "I'm coming, too! And Alice'll catch you."

"She won't catch me." Her elder sister's voice was scornful. "She's out in the pantry, helping. With the man from Gray's."

"All the same, I'm coming. I want to see if it's ice cream in little molds or just the smashed kind with strawberries. And, if Alice won't catch you, she won't catch me."

"It'll be molds," said the other, from the depths of experience, "Mother always has molds for the Whitehouses. And Mr. Whitehouse sort of clicks in his throat and talks about sweets to the sweet. You'd think he'd know that's dopey but he doesn't. And, anyhow, it isn't your turn."

"It never is my turn," mourned her junior, tugging at the bedclothes.

"All right," said the elder. "If you *want* to go! And make a noise. And then they hear us and somebody comes up—"

"Sometimes they bring you things, when they come up," said the younger dreamily. "The man with the pink face did. And he said I was a little angel."

"Was he dopey!" said her elder, blightingly, "and anyhow,

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you were sick afterwards and you know what Mother said about it."

The younger child sighed, a long sigh of defeat and resignation.

"All right," she said. "But next time it *is* my turn. And you tell me if it's in molds." Her elder nodded as she stole out of the door.

At the first turn of the stairs, a small landing offered an excellent observation post, provided one could get there unperceived. Jennifer Sharp reached it soundlessly and, curling herself up into the smallest possible space, stared eagerly down and across into the dining room.

She couldn't see the whole table. But she saw at once that Mrs. Whitehouse had a thing like a silver beetle in her hair, that Colonel Crandall looked more like a police dog than ever, and that there were little silver baskets of pink and white mints. That meant that it was really a grand dinner. She made a special note of the ice cream for Joan.

Talk and laughter drifted up to her—strange phrases and incomprehensible jests from another world, to be remembered, puzzled over, and analyzed for meaning or the lack of it, when she and Joan were alone. She hugged her knees, she was having a good time. Pretty soon, Father would light the little blue flame under the mysterious glass machine that made coffee. She liked to see him do that.

She looked at him now, appraisingly. Colonel Crandall had fought Germans in trenches and Mr. Whitehouse had a bank to keep his money in. But Father, on the whole, was nicer than either of them. She remembered, as if looking back across a vast plain, when Father and Mother had merely been Father and Mother—huge, natural phenomena, beloved but inexplicable as the weather—unique of their kind. Now she was older—she knew that other people's fathers and mothers were different. Even Joan knew that, though Joan was still a great deal of a baby. Jennifer felt very old and rather benevolent as she

considered herself and her parents and the babyishness of Joan.

Mr. Whitehouse was talking, but Father wanted to talk, too—she knew that from the quick little gesture he made with his left hand. Now they all laughed and Father leaned forward.

"That reminds me," he was saying, "of one of our favorite stories—" How young and amused his face looked, suddenly!

His eldest daughter settled back in the shadow, a bored but tolerant smile on her lips. She knew what was coming.

When Terry Farrell and Roger Sharp fell in love, the war to end war was just over, bobbed hair was still an issue, the movies did not talk and women's clothes couldn't be crazier. It was also generally admitted that the younger generation was wild but probably sound at heart and that, as soon as we got a businessman in the White House, things were going to be all right.

As for Terry and Roger, they were both wild and sophisticated. They would have told you so. Terry had been kissed by several men at several dances and Roger could remember the curious, grimy incident of the girl at Fort Worth. So that showed you. They were entirely emancipated and free. But they fell in love very simply and unexpectedly—and their marriage was going to be like no other marriage, because they knew all the right answers to all the questions, and had no intention of submitting to the commonplaces of life. At first, in fact, they were going to form a free union—they had read of that, in popular books of the period. But, somehow or other, as soon as Roger started to call, both families began to get interested. They had no idea of paying the slightest attention to their families. But, when your family happens to comment favorably on the man or girl that you are in love with, that is a hard thing to fight. Before they knew it, they

were formally engaged, and liking it on the whole, though both of them agreed that a formal engagement was an outworn and ridiculous social custom.

They quarreled often enough, for they were young, and a trifle ferocious in the vehemence with which they expressed the views they knew to be right. These views had to do, in general, with freedom and personality, and were often supported by quotations from *The Golden Bough*. Neither of them had read *The Golden Bough* all the way through, but both agreed that it was a great book. But the quarrels were about generalities and had no sting. And always, before and after, was the sense of discovering in each other previously unsuspected but delightful potentialities and likenesses and beliefs.

As a matter of fact, they were quite a well-suited couple—"made for each other," as the saying used to go; though they would have hooted at the idea. They had read the minor works of Havelock Ellis and knew the name of Freud. They didn't believe in people being "made for each other"—they were too advanced.

It was ten days before the date set for their marriage that their first real quarrel occurred. And then, unfortunately, it didn't stop at generalities.

They had got away for the day from the presents and their families, to take a long walk in the country, with a picnic lunch. Both, in spite of themselves, were a little solemn, a little nervous. The atmosphere of Approaching Wedding weighed on them both—when their hands touched, the current ran, but, when they looked at each other, they felt strange. Terry had been shopping the day before—she was tired, she began to wish that Roger would not walk so fast. Roger was wondering if the sixth usher—the one who had been in the marines—would really turn up. His mind also held dark suspicions as to the probable behavior of the best man, when it came to such outworn customs as rice and shoes. They were sure that they were in love, sure now, that they wanted to be married. But their conversation was curiously polite.

The lunch did something for them, so did the peace of being alone. But they had forgotten the salt and Terry had rubbed her heel. When Roger got out his pipe, there was only tobacco left for half a smoke. Still, the wind was cool and the earth pleasant and, as they sat with their backs against a gray boulder in the middle of a green field, they began to think more naturally. The current between their linked hands ran stronger —in a moment or two, they would be the selves they had always known.

It was, perhaps, unfortunate that Roger should have selected that particular moment in which to tell the anteater story.

He knocked out his pipe and smiled, suddenly, at something in his mind. Terry felt a knock at her heart, a sudden sweetness on her tongue—how young and amused he always looked when he smiled! She smiled back at him, her whole face changing.

"What is it, darling?" she said.

He laughed. "Oh nothing," he said. "I just happened to remember. Did you ever hear the story about the anteater?"

She shook her head.

"Well," he began. "Oh, you must have heard it—sure you haven't? Well, anyway, there was a little town down South . . .

"And the Negro said, 'Why, lady, that ain't no anteater—that's Edward!' " he finished, triumphantly, a few moments later. He couldn't help laughing when he had finished—the silly tale always amused him, old as it was. Then he looked at Terry and saw that she was not laughing.

"Why, what's the matter?" he said, mechanically. "Are you cold, dear, or—"

Her hand, which had been slowly stiffening in his clasp, now withdrew itself entirely from his.

"No" she said, staring ahead of her, "I'm all right. Thanks."

He looked at her. There was somebody there he had never seen before.

"Well," he said, confusedly, "well." Then his mouth set, his jaw stuck out, he also regarded the landscape.

Terry stole a glance at him. It was terrible and appalling to see him sitting there, looking bleak and estranged. She wanted to speak, to throw herself at him, to say: "Oh, it's all my fault—it's all my fault!" and know the luxury of saying it. Then she remembered the anteater and her heart hardened.

It was not even, she told herself sternly, as if it were a dirty story. It wasn't—and, if it had been, weren't they always going to be frank and emancipated with each other about things like that? But it was just the kind of story she'd always hated—cruel and—yes—vulgar. Not even healthily vulgar—vulgar with no redeeming adjective. He ought to have known she hated that kind of story. He ought to have known!

If love meant anything, according to the books, it meant understanding the other person, didn't it? And, if you didn't understand them, in such a little thing, why, what was life going to be afterwards? Love was like a new silver dollar—bright, untarnished and whole. There could be no possible compromises with love.

All these confused but vehement thoughts flashed through her mind. She also knew that she was tired and wind-blown and jumpy and that the rub on her heel was a little red spot of pain. And then Roger was speaking.

"I'm sorry you found my story so unamusing," he said in stiff tones of injury and accusation. "If I'd known about the way you felt, I'd have tried to tell a funnier one—even if we did say—"

He stopped, his frozen face turned toward her. She could feel the muscles of her own face tighten and freeze in answer.

"I wasn't in the *least* shocked, I assure you," she said in the same, stilted voice. "I just didn't think it was very funny. That's all."

"I get you. Well, pardon my glove," he said, and turned to the landscape.

A little pulse of anger began to beat in her wrist. Something was being hurt, something was being broken. If he'd only been Roger and kissed her instead of saying—well, it was his fault, now.

"No, I didn't think it was funny at all," she said, in a voice whose sharpness surprised her, "if you want to know. Just sort of cruel and common and—well, the poor Negro—"

"That's right!" he said, in a voice of bitter irritation, "pity the Negro! Pity everybody but the person who's trying to amuse you! I think it's a damn funny story—always have—and—"

They were both on their feet and stabbing at each other, now.

"And it's vulgar," she was saying, hotly, "plain vulgar—not even dirty enough to be funny. Anteater indeed! Why, Roger Sharp, it's—"

"Where's that sense of humor you were always talking about?" he was shouting. "My God, what's happened to you, Terry? I always thought you were—and here you—"

"Well, we both of us certainly seem to have been mistaken about each other," she could hear her strange voice, saying. Then, even more dreadfully, came his unfamiliar accents, "Well, if that's the way you feel about it, we certainly have."

They looked at each other, aghast. "Here!" she was saying, "here! Oh, Lord, why won't it come off my finger?"

"You keep that on—do you hear, you damn little fool?" he roared at her, so unexpectedly that she started, tripped, caught her shoe in a cleft of rock, fell awkwardly, and, in spite of all her resolves, burst undignifiedly and conventionally into a passion of tears.

Then there was the reconciliation. It took place, no doubt, on entirely conventional lines, and was studded with "No, it was my fault! Say it was!" but, to them it was an event unique in history.

Terry thought it over remorsefully, that evening, waiting for Roger. Roger was right. She had been a little fool. She

knew the inexplicable solace of feeling that she had been a little fool.

And yet, they had said those things to each other, and meant them. He had hurt her, she had actually meant to hurt him. She stared at these facts, solemnly. Love, the bright silver dollar. Not like the commonplace coins in other people's pockets. But something special, different—already a little, ever-so-faintly tarnished, as a pane is tarnished by breath?

She had been a little fool. But she couldn't quite forget the anteater.

Then she was in Roger's arms—and knew, with utter confidence, that she and Roger were different. They were always going to be different. Their marriage wouldn't ever be like any other marriage in the world.

The Sharps had been married for exactly six years and five hours and Terry, looking across the table at the clever, intelligent face of her affectionate and satisfactory husband, suddenly found herself most desolately alone.

It had been a mistake in the first place—going to the Lattimores for dinner on their own anniversary. Mr. Lattimore was the head of Roger's company—Mrs. Lattimore's invitation had almost the force of a royal command. They had talked it over, Roger and she, and decided, sensibly, that they couldn't get out of it. But, all the same, it had been a mistake.

They were rational, modern human beings, she assured herself ferociously. They weren't like the horrible married couples in the cartoons—the little woman asking her baffled mate if he remembered what date it was, and the rest of it. They thought better of life and love than to tie either of them to an artificial scheme of days. They were different. Nevertheless, there had been a time when they had said to each other, with foolish smiles, "We've been married a week—or a month—or a year! Just think of it!" This time now seemed to her, as she looked back on it coldly, a geologic age away.

She considered Roger with odd dispassionateness. Yes, there he was—an intelligent, rising young man in his first thirties. Not particularly handsome but indubitably attractive—charming, when he chose—a loyal friend, a good father, a husband one could take pride in. And it seemed to her that if he made that nervous little gesture with his left hand again—or told the anteater story—she would scream.

It was funny that the knowledge that you had lost everything that you had most counted upon should come to you at a formal dinner party, while you talked over the war days with a dark-haired officer whose voice had the honey of the South in it. Then she remembered that she and Roger had first discovered their love for each other, not upon a moon-swept lawn, but in the fly-specked waiting room of a minor railroad station—and the present event began to seem less funny. Life was like that. It gave, unexpectedly, abruptly, with no regard for stage setting or the properties of romance. And, as unexpectedly and abruptly, it took away.

While her mouth went on talking, a part of her mind searched numbly and painfully for the reasons which had brought this calamity about. They had loved each other in the beginning—even now, she was sure of that. They had tried to be wise, they had not broken faith, they had been frank and gay. No deep division of nature sundered them—no innate fault in either, spreading under pressure, to break the walls of their house apart. She looked for a guilty party but she could find none. There was only a progression of days; a succession of tiny events that followed in each others' footsteps without haste or rest. That was all, but that seemed to have been enough. And Roger was looking over at her—with that same odd, exploring glance she had used a moment ago.

What remained? A house with a little boy asleep in it, a custom of life, certain habits, certain memories, certain hardships lived through together. Enough for most people, perhaps? They had wanted more than that.

Something said to her, "Well and if—after all—the real thing hasn't even come?" She turned to her dinner partner, for the first time really seeing him. When you did see him, he was quite a charming person. His voice was delightful. There was nothing in him in the least like Roger Sharp.

She laughed and saw, at the laugh, something wake in his eyes. He, too, had not been really conscious of her, before. But he was, now. She was not thirty, yet—she had kept her looks. She felt old powers, old states of mind flow back to her; things she had thought forgotten, the glamor of first youth. Somewhere, on the curve of a dark lake, a boat was drifting—a man was talking to her—she could not see his face but she knew it was not Roger's—

She was roused from her waking dream by Mrs. Lattimore's voice.

"Why, I'd never have dreamt!" Mrs. Lattimore was saying "I had no idea!" She called down the table, "George! Do you know it's these people's anniversary—so sweet of them to come—and I positively had to worm it out of Mr. Sharp!"

Terry went hot and cold all over. She was sensible, she was brokenhearted, love was a myth, but she had particularly depended on Roger not to tell anybody that this was their anniversary. And Roger had told.

She lived through the congratulations and the customary jokes about "Well, this is your seventh year beginning—and you know what they say about the seventh year!" She even lived through Mrs. Lattimore's pensive "Six years! Why, my dear, I never would have believed it! You're children—positive children!"

She could have bitten Mrs. Lattimore. "Children!" she thought, indignantly, "When I—when we—when everything's in ruins!" She tried to freeze Roger, at long distance, but he was not looking her way. And then she caught her breath, for a worse fate was in store for her.

Someone, most unhappily, had brought up the subject of

pet animals. She saw a light break slowly on Roger's face—she saw him lean forward. She prayed for the roof to fall, for time to stop, for Mrs. Lattimore to explode like a Roman candle into green and purple stars. But, even as she prayed, she knew that it was no use. Roger was going to tell the anteater story.

The story no longer seemed shocking to her, or even cruel. But it epitomized all the years of her life with Roger. In the course of those years, she calculated desperately, she had heard that story at least a hundred times.

Somehow—she never knew how—she managed to survive the hundred-and-first recital, from the hideously familiar, "Well, there was a little town down South . . ." to the jubilant "That's Edward!" at the end. She even summoned up a fixed smile to meet the tempest of laughter that followed. And then, mercifully, Mrs. Lattimore was giving the signal to rise.

The men hung behind—the anteater story had been capped by another. Terry found herself, unexpectedly, tête-à-tête with Mrs. Lattimore.

"My dear," the great lady was saying, "I'd rather have asked you another night, of course, if I'd known. But I am very glad you could come tonight. George particularly wished Mr. Colden to meet your brilliant husband. They are going into that Western project together, you know, and Tom Colden leaves tomorrow. So we both appreciate your kindness in coming."

Terry found a sudden queer pulse of warmth through the cold fog that seemed to envelop her. "Oh," she stammered, "but Roger and I have been married for years—and we were delighted to come—" She looked at the older woman. "Tell me, though," she said, with an irrepressible burst of confidence, "doesn't it ever seem to you as if you couldn't bear to hear a certain story again—not if you *died*?"

A gleam of mirth appeared in Mrs. Lattimore's eyes.

"My dear," she said "has George ever told you about his trip to Peru?"

"No."

"Well, don't let him." She reflected, "Or, no—do let him," she said. "Poor George—he does get such fun out of it. And you would be a new audience. But it happened fifteen years ago, my dear, and I think I could repeat every word after him verbatim, once he's started. Even so—I often feel as if he'd never stop."

"And then what do you do?" said Terry, breathlessly—far too interested now to remember tact.

The older woman smiled. "I think of the story I am going to tell about the guide in the Uffizi gallery," she said. "George must have heard that story ten thousand times. But he's still alive."

She put her hand on the younger woman's arm.

"We're all of us alike, my dear," she said. "When I'm an old lady in a wheel chair, George will still be telling me about Peru. But then, if he didn't, I wouldn't know he was George."

She turned away, leaving Terry to ponder over the words. Her anger was not appeased—her life still lay about her in ruins. But, when the dark young officer came into the room, she noticed that his face seemed rather commonplace and his voice was merely a pleasant voice.

Mr. Colden's car dropped the Sharps at their house. The two men stayed at the gate for a moment, talking—Terry ran in to see after the boy. He was sleeping peacefully with his fists tight shut; he looked like Roger in his sleep. Suddenly, all around her were the familiar sights and sounds of home. She felt tired and as if she had come back from a long journey.

She went downstairs. Roger was just coming in. He looked tired, too, she noticed, but exultant as well.

"Colden had to run," he said at once. "Left good-by for you —hoped you wouldn't mind—said awfully nice things. He's really a great old boy, Terry. And, as for this new Western business—"

He noticed the grave look on her face and his own grew grave.

"I *am* sorry, darling," he said. "Did you mind it a lot? Well, I did—but it couldn't be helped. You bet your life that next time—"

"Oh, next time—" she said, and kissed him. "Of course I didn't mind. We're different, aren't we?"

That intelligent matron, Mrs. Roger Sharp, now seated at the foot of her own dinner table, from time to time made the appropriate interjections—the "Really?"s and "Yes indeed"s and "That's what I always tell Roger"s—which comprised the whole duty of a hostess in Colonel Crandall's case. Colonel Crandall was singularly restful—give him these few crumbs and he could be depended upon to talk indefinitely and yet without creating a conversational desert around him. Mrs. Sharp was very grateful to him at the moment. She wanted to retire to a secret place in her mind and observe her own dinner party, for an instant, as a spectator—and Colonel Crandall was giving her the chance.

It was going very well indeed. She had hoped for it from the first, but now she was sure of it and she gave a tiny, inaudible sigh of relief. Roger was at his best—the young Durwards had recovered from their initial shyness—Mr. Whitehouse had not yet started talking politics—the soufflé had been a success. She relaxed a little and let her mind drift off upon other things.

Tomorrow, Roger must remember about the light gray suit, she must make a dental appointment for Jennifer, Mrs. Quaritch must be dealt with tactfully in the matter of the committee. It was too early to decide about camp for the girls but Roger Junior must know they were proud of his marks, and if Mother intended to give up her trip just because of poor old Miss Tompkins—well, something would have to be done.

There were also the questions of the new oil furnace, the School board and the Brewster wedding. But none of these really bothered her—her life was always busy—and, at the moment, she felt an unwonted desire to look back into Time.

Over twenty years since the Armistice. Twenty years. And Roger Junior was seventeen—and she and Roger had been married since nineteen-twenty. Pretty soon they would be celebrating their twentieth anniversary. It seemed incredible but it was true.

She looked back through those years, seeing an ever-younger creature with her own face, a creature that laughed or wept for forgotten reasons, ran wildly here, sat solemn as a young judge there. She felt a pang of sympathy for that young heedlessness, a pang of humor as well. She was not old but she had been so very young.

Roger and she—the beginning—the first years—Roger Junior's birth. The house on Edgehill Road, the one with the plate rail in the dining room, and crying when they left because they'd never be so happy again, but they had, and it was an inconvenient house. Being jealous of Milly Baldwin—and how foolish!—and the awful country-club dance where Roger got drunk; and it wasn't awful any more. The queer, piled years of the boom—the crash—the bad time—Roger coming home after Tom Colden's suicide and the look on his face. Jennifer. Joan. Houses. People. Events. And always the headlines in the papers, the voices on the radio, dinning, dinning "No security—trouble—disaster—no security." And yet, out of insecurity, they had loved and made children. Out of insecurity, for the space of breath, for an hour, they had built, and now and then found peace.

No, there's no guarantee, she thought. There's no guarantee. When you're young, you think there is, but there isn't. And yet I'd do it over. Pretty soon we'll have been married twenty years.

"Yes, that's what I always tell Roger," she said, automat-

ically. Colonel Crandall smiled and proceeded. He was still quite handsome, she thought, in his dark way, but he was getting very bald. Roger's hair had a few gray threads in it but it was still thick and unruly. She liked men to keep their hair. She remembered, a long while ago, thinking something or other about Colonel Crandall's voice, but she could not remember what she had thought.

She noticed a small white speck on the curve of the stairway but said nothing. The wrapper was warm and, if Jennifer wasn't noticed, she would creep back to bed soon enough. It was different with Joan.

Suddenly, she was alert. Mrs. Durward, at Roger's end of the table, had mentioned the Zoo. She knew what that meant —Zoo—the new buildings—the new Housing Commissioner —and Mr. Whitehouse let loose on his favorite political grievance all through the end of dinner. She caught Roger's eye for a miraculous instant. Mr. Whitehouse was already clearing his throat. But Roger had the signal. Roger would save them. She saw his left hand tapping in its little gesture—felt him suddenly draw the party together. How young and amused his face looked, under the candlelight!

"That reminds me of one of our favorite stories," he was saying. She sank back in her chair. A deep content pervaded her. He was going to tell the anteater story—and, even if some of the people had heard it, they would have to laugh, he always told it so well. She smiled in anticipation of the triumphant "That's Edward!" And, after that, if Mr. Whitehouse still threatened, she herself would tell the story about Joan and the watering pot.

Jennifer crept back into the darkened room.

"Well?" said an eager whisper from the other bed.

Jennifer drew a long breath. The memory of the lighted dinner table rose before her, varicolored, glittering, portentous —a stately omen—a thing of splendor and mystery, to be pon-

dered upon for days. How could she ever make Joan see it as she had seen it? And Joan was such a baby, anyway.

"Oh—nobody saw me," she said, in a bored voice, "But it was in molds, that's all—oh yes—and Father told the anteater story again."

ANATOLE FRANCE

Our Lady's Juggler

IN THE DAYS OF KING LOUIS, there was a poor juggler in France, a native of Compiègne, Barnaby by name, who went about from town to town performing feats of skill and strength.

On fair days he would unfold an old worn-out carpet in the public square, and when by means of a jovial address, which he had learned of a very ancient juggler, and which he never varied in the least, he had drawn together the children and loafers, he assumed extraordinary attitudes, and balanced a tin plate on the tip of his nose. At first the crowd would feign indifference.

But when, supporting himself on his hands face downwards, he threw into the air six copper balls, which glittered in the sunshine, and caught them again with his feet; or when throwing himself backwards until his heels and the nape of the neck met, giving his body the form of a perfect wheel, he would juggle in this posture with a dozen knives, a murmur of admiration would escape the spectators, and pieces of money rain down upon the carpet.

Nevertheless, like the majority of these who live by their wits, Barnaby of Compiègne had a great struggle to make a living.

Earning his bread in the sweat of his brow, he bore rather

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more than his share of the penalties consequent upon the misdoings of our father Adam.

Again, he was unable to work as constantly as he would have been willing to do. The warmth of the sun and the broad daylight were as necessary to enable him to display his brilliant parts as to the trees if flower and fruit should be expected of them. In winter time he was nothing more than a tree stripped of its leaves, and as it were dead. The frozen ground was hard to the juggler, and, like the grasshopper of which Marie de France tells us, the inclement season caused him to suffer both cold and hunger. But as he was simple-natured he bore his ills patiently.

He had never meditated on the origin of wealth, nor upon the inequality of human conditions. He believed firmly that if this life should prove hard, the life to come could not fail to redress the balance, and this hope upheld him. He did not resemble those thievish and miscreant Merry Andrews who sell their souls to the devil. He never blasphemed God's name; he lived uprightly, and although he had no wife of his own, he did not covet his neighbour's, since woman is ever the enemy of the strong man, as it appears by the history of Samson recorded in the Scriptures.

In truth, his was not a nature much disposed to carnal delights, and it was a greater deprivation to him to forsake the tankard than the Hebe who bore it. For whilst not wanting in sobriety, he was fond of a drink when the weather waxed hot. He was a worthy man who feared God, and was very devoted to the Blessed Virgin.

Never did he fail on entering a church to fall upon his knees before the image of the Mother of God, and offer up this prayer to her:

"Blessed Lady, keep watch over my life until it shall please God that I die, and when I am dead, ensure to me the possession of the joys of paradise."

II

Now on a certain evening after a dreary wet day, as Barnaby pursued his road, sad and bent, carrying under his arm his balls and knives wrapped up in his old carpet, on the watch for some barn where, though he might not sup, he might sleep, he perceived on the road, going in the same direction as himself, a monk, whom he saluted courteously. And as they walked at the same rate they fell into conversation with one another.

"Fellow traveller," said the monk, "how comes it about that you are clothed all in green? Is it perhaps in order to take the part of a jester in some mystery play?"

"Not at all, good father," replied Barnaby. "Such as you see me, I am called Barnaby, and for my calling I am a juggler. There would be no pleasanter calling in the world if it would always provide one with daily bread."

"Friend Barnaby," returned the monk, "be careful what you say. There is no calling more pleasant than the monastic life. Those who lead it are occupied with the praises of God, the Blessed Virgin, and the saints; and, indeed, the religious life is one ceaseless hymn to the Lord."

Barnaby replied—

"Good father, I own that I spoke like an ignorant man. Your calling cannot be in any respect compared to mine, and although there may be some merit in dancing with a penny balanced on a stick on the tip of one's nose, it is not a merit which comes within hail of your own. Gladly would I, like you, good father, sing my office day by day, and specially the office of the most Holy Virgin, to whom I have vowed a singular devotion. In order to embrace the monastic life I would willingly abandon the art by which from Soissons to Beauvais I am well known in upwards of six hundred towns and villages."

The monk was touched by the juggler's simplicity, and as he was not lacking in discernment, he at once recognized in

Barnaby one of those men of whom it is said in the Scriptures: Peace on earth to men of good will. And for this reason he replied—

"Friend Barnaby, come with me, and I will have you admitted into the monastery of which I am Prior. He who guided St. Mary of Egypt in the desert set me upon your path to lead you into the way of salvation."

It was in this manner, then, that Barnaby became a monk. In the monastery into which he was received the religious vied with one another in the worship of the Blessed Virgin, and in her honour each employed all the knowledge and all the skill which God had given him.

The prior on his part wrote books dealing according to the rules of scholarship with the virtues of the Mother of God.

Brother Maurice, with a deft hand copied out these treatises upon sheets of vellum.

Brother Alexander adorned the leaves with delicate miniature paintings. Here were displayed the Queen of Heaven seated upon Solomon's throne, and while four lions were on guard at her feet, around the nimbus which encircled her head hovered seven doves, which are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gifts, namely, of Fear, Piety, Knowledge, Strength, Counsel, Understanding, and Wisdom. For her companions she had six virgins with hair of gold, namely, Humility, Prudence, Seclusion, Submission, Virginity, and Obedience.

At her feet were two little naked figures, perfectly white, in an attitude of supplication. These were souls imploring her all-powerful intercession for their soul's health, and we may be sure not imploring in vain.

Upon another page facing this, Brother Alexander represented Eve, so that the Fall and the Redemption could be perceived at one and the same time—Eve the Wife abased, and Mary the Virgin exalted.

Furthermore, to the marvel of the beholder, this book contained presentments of the Well of Living Waters, the Foun-

tain, the Lily, the Moon, the Sun, and the Garden Enclosed of which the Song of Songs tells us, the Gate of Heaven and the City of God, and all these things were symbols of the Blessed Virgin.

Brother Marbode was likewise one of the most loving children of Mary.

He spent all his days carving images in stone, so that his beard, his eyebrows, and his hair were white with dust, and his eyes continually swollen and weeping; but his strength and cheerfulness were not diminished, although he was now well gone in years, and it was clear that the Queen of Paradise still cherished her servant in his old age. Marbode represented her seated upon a throne, her brow encircled with an orb-shaped nimbus set with pearls. And he took care that the folds of her dress should cover the feet of her, concerning whom the prophet declared: My beloved is as a garden enclosed.

Sometimes, too, he depicted her in the semblance of a child full of grace, and appearing to say, "Thou art my God, even from my mother's womb."

In the priory, moreover, were poets who composed hymns in Latin, both in prose and verse, in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and amongst the company was even a brother from Picardy who sang the miracles of Our Lady in rhymed verse and in the vulgar tongue.

III

Being a witness of this emulation in praise and the glorious harvest of their labours, Barnaby mourned his own ignorance and simplicity.

"Alas!" he sighed, as he took his solitary walk in the little shelterless garden of the monastery, "wretched wight that I am, to be unable, like my brothers, worthily to praise the Holy Mother of God, to whom I have vowed my whole heart's affection. Alas! alas! I am but a rough man and unskilled in the arts, and I can render you in service, blessed Lady, neither

edifying sermons, nor treatises set out in order according to rule, nor ingenious paintings, nor statues truthfully sculptured, nor verses whose march is measured to the beat of feet. No gift have I, alas!"

After this fashion he groaned and gave himself up to sorrow. But one evening, when the monks were spending their hour of liberty in conversation, he heard one of them tell the tale of a religious man who could repeat nothing other than the Ave Maria. This poor man was despised for his ignorance; but after his death there issued forth from his mouth five roses in honour of the five letters of the name Mary (Marie), and thus his sanctity was made manifest.

Whilst he listened to this narrative Barnaby marvelled yet once again at the loving kindness of the Virgin; but the lesson of that blessed death did not avail to console him, for his heart overflowed with zeal, and he longed to advance the glory of his Lady, who is in heaven.

How to compass this he sought but could find no way, and day by day he became the more cast down, when one morning he awakened filled full with joy, hastened to the chapel, and remained there alone for more than an hour. After dinner he returned to the chapel once more.

And, starting from that moment, he repaired daily to the chapel at such hours as it was deserted, and spent within it a good part of the time which the other monks devoted to the liberal and mechanical arts. His sadness vanished, nor did he any longer groan.

A demeanour so strange awakened the curiosity of the monks.

These began to ask one another for what purpose Brother Barnaby could be indulging so persistently in retreat.

The prior, whose duty it is to let nothing escape him in the behaviour of his children in religion, resolved to keep a watch over Barnaby during his withdrawals to the chapel. One day, then, when he was shut up there after his custom, the prior,

accompanied by two of the older monks, went to discover through the chinks in the door what was going on within the chapel.

They saw Barnaby before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, head downwards, with his feet in the air, and he was juggling with six balls of copper and a dozen knives. In honour of the Holy Mother of God he was performing those feats, which aforetime had won him most renown. Not recognizing that the simple fellow was thus placing at the service of the Blessed Virgin his knowledge and skill, the two old monks exclaimed against the sacrilege.

The prior was aware how stainless was Barnaby's soul, but he concluded that he had been seized with madness. They were all three preparing to lead him swiftly from the chapel, when they saw the Blessed Virgin descend the steps of the altar and advance to wipe away with a fold of her azure robe the sweat which was dropping from her juggler's forehead.

Then the prior, falling upon his face upon the pavement, uttered these words—

"Blessed are the simple-hearted, for they shall see God."

"Amen!" responded the old brethren, and kissed the ground.

HEYWOOD BROUN

Frankincense and Myrrh

ONCE THERE WERE THREE KINGS in the East and they were wise men. They read the heavens and they saw a certain strange star by which they knew that in a distant land the King of the world was to be born. The star beckoned to them and they made preparations for a long journey.

From their palaces they gathered rich gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. Great sacks of precious stuffs were loaded upon the backs of the camels which were to bear them on their journey. Everything was in readiness, but one of the wise men seemed perplexed and would not come at once to join his two companions who were eager and impatient to be on their way in the direction indicated by the star.

They were old, these two kings, and the other wise man was young. When they asked him he could not tell why he waited. He knew that his treasuries had been ransacked for rich gifts for the King of Kings. It seemed that there was nothing more which he could give, and yet he was not content.

He made no answer to the old men who shouted to him that the time had come. The camels were impatient and swayed and snarled. The shadows across the desert grew longer. And still the young king sat and thought deeply.

At length he smiled, and he ordered his servants to open

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the great treasure sack upon the back of the first of his camels. Then he went into a high chamber to which he had not been since he was a child. He rummaged about and presently came out and approached the caravan. In his hand he carried something which glinted in the sun.

The kings thought that he bore some new gift more rare and precious than any which they had been able to find in all their treasure rooms. They bent down to see, and even the camel drivers peered from the backs of the great beasts to find out what it was which gleamed in the sun. They were curious about this last gift for which all the caravan had waited.

And the young king took a toy from his hand and placed it upon the sand. It was a dog of tin, painted white and speckled with black spots. Great patches of paint had worn away and left the metal clear, and that was why the toy shone in the sun as if it had been silver.

The youngest of the wise men turned a key in the side of the little black and white dog and then he stepped aside so that the kings and the camel drivers could see. The dog leaped high in the air and then fell over upon his side and lay there with a set and painted grin upon his face.

A child, the son of a camel driver, laughed and clapped his hands, but the kings were stern. They rebuked the youngest of the wise men and he paid no attention but called to his chief servant to make the first of all the camels kneel. Then he picked up the toy of tin and, opening the treasure sack, placed his last gift with his own hands in the mouth of the sack so that it rested safely upon the soft bags of incense.

"What folly has seized you?" cried the eldest of the wise men. "Is this a gift to bear to the King of Kings in the far country?"

And the young man answered and said: "For the King of Kings there are gifts of great richness, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

"But this," he said, "is for the child in Bethlehem!"

LORD DUNSANY

The True History of the Hare and the Tortoise

FOR A LONG TIME THERE WAS doubt with acrimony among the beasts as to whether the Hare or the Tortoise could run the swifter. Some said the Hare was the swifter of the two because he had such long ears, and others said that the Tortoise was the swifter because anyone whose shell was so hard as that should be able to run hard too. And lo, the forces of estrangement and disorder perpetually postponed a decisive contest.

But when there was nearly war among the beasts, at last an arrangement was come to and it was decided that the Hare and the Tortoise should run a race of five hundred yards so that all should see who was right.

"Ridiculous nonsense!" said the Hare, and it was all his backers could do to get him to run.

"The contest is most welcome to me," said the Tortoise. "I shall not shirk it."

O, how his backers cheered.

Feeling ran high on the day of the race; the goose rushed at the fox and nearly pecked him. Both sides spoke loudly of the approaching victory up to the very moment of the race.

"I am absolutely confident of success," said the Tortoise. But the Hare said nothing, he looked bored and cross. Some of his

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supporters deserted him then and went to the other side, who were loudly cheering the Tortoise's inspiriting words. But many remained with the Hare. "We shall not be disappointed in him," they said. "A beast with such long ears is bound to win."

"Run hard," said the supporters of the Tortoise.

And "run hard" became a kind of catch-phrase which everybody repeated to one another. "Hard shell and hard living. That's what the country wants. Run hard," they said. And these words were never uttered but multitudes cheered from their hearts.

Then they were off, and suddenly there was a hush.

The Hare dashed off for about a hundred yards, then he looked round to see where his rival was.

"It is rather absurd," he said, "to race with a Tortoise." And he sat down and scratched himself. "Run hard! Run hard!" shouted some.

"Let him rest," shouted others. And "let him rest" became a catch-phrase too.

And after a while his rival drew near to him.

"There comes that damned Tortoise," said the Hare, and he got up and ran as hard as he could so that he should not let the Tortoise beat him.

"Those ears will win," said his friends. "Those ears will win; and establish upon an incontestable footing the truth of what we have said." And some of them turned to the backers of the Tortoise and said: "What about your beast now?"

"Run hard," they replied. "Run hard."

The Hare ran on for nearly three hundred yards, nearly in fact as far as the winning-post, when it suddenly struck him what a fool he looked running races with a Tortoise who was nowhere in sight, and he sat down again and scratched.

"Run hard. Run hard," said the crowd, and "Let him rest."

"Whatever is the use of it?" said the Hare, and this time he stopped for good. Some say he slept.

There was desperate excitement for an hour or two, and then the Tortoise won.

"Run hard. Run hard," shouted his backers: "Hard shell and hard living: that's what has done it." And then they asked the Tortoise what his achievement signified and he went and asked the Turtle. And the Turtle said: "It is a glorious victory for the forces of swiftness." And then the Tortoise repeated it to his friends. And all the beasts said nothing else for years. And even to this day "a glorious victory for the forces of swiftness" is a catch-phrase in the house of the snail.

And the reason that this version of the race is not widely known is that very few of those that witnessed it survived the great forest-fire that happened shortly after. It came up over the weald by night with a great wind. The Hare and the Tortoise and a very few of the beasts saw it far off from a high bare hill that was at the edge of the trees, and they hurriedly called a meeting to decide what messenger they would send to warn the beasts in the forest.

They sent the Tortoise.

WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

Blue Murder

At Mill Crossing it was already past sunset. The rays, redder for what autumn leaves were left, still laid fire along the woods crowning the stony slopes of Jim Bluedge's pastures; but then the line of the dusk began and from that level it filled the valley, washing with transparent blue the buildings scattered about the bridge, Jim's house and horse-sheds and hay-barns, Frank's store, and Camden's blacksmith shop.

The mill had been gone fifty years, but the falls which had turned its wheel still poured in the bottom of the valley, and when the wind came from the Footstool way their mist wet the smithy, built of the old stone on the old foundations, and their pouring drowned the clink of Camden's hammer.

Just now they couldn't drown Camden's hammer, for he wasn't in the smithy; he was at his brother's farm. Standing inside the smaller of the horse paddocks behind the sheds he drove in stakes, one after another, cut green from saplings, and so disposed as to cover the more glaring of the weaknesses in the five-foot fence. From time to time, when one was done and another to do, he rested the head of his sledge in the pocket of his leather apron (he was never without it; it was as though it had grown on him, lumpy with odds and ends of his

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trade—bolts and nails and rusty pliers and old horseshoes) and, standing so, he mopped the sweat from his face and looked up at the mountain.

Of the three brothers he was the dumb one. He seldom had anything to say. It was providential (folks said) that of the three enterprises at the Crossing one was a smithy; for while he was a strong, big, hungry-muscled fellow, he never would have had the shrewdness to run the store or the farm. He was better at pounding—pounding while the fire reddened and the sparks flew, and thinking, and letting other people wonder what he was thinking of.

Blossom Bluedge, his brother's wife, sat perched on the top bar of the paddock gate, holding her skirts around her ankles with a trifle too much care to be quite unconscious, and watched him work. When he looked at the mountain he was looking at the mares, half a mile up the slope, grazing in a line as straight as soldiers, their heads all one way. But Blossom thought it was the receding light he was thinking of, and her own sense of misgiving returned and deepened.

"You'd have thought Jim would be home before this, wouldn't you, Cam?"

Her brother-in-law said nothing.

"Cam, look at me!"

It was nervousness, but it wasn't all nervousness—she was the prettiest girl in the valley; a small part of it was mingled coquetry and pique.

The smith began to drive another stake, swinging the hammer from high overhead, his muscles playing in fine big rhythmical convulsions under the skin of his arms and chest, covered with short blond down. Studying him cornerwise, Blossom muttered, "Well, *don't* look at me then!"

He was too dumb for any use. He was as dumb as this: when all three of the Bluedge boys were after her a year ago, Frank, the storekeeper, had brought her candy: chocolates wrapped in silver foil in a two-pound Boston box. Jim had laid before

her the Bluedge farm and with it the dominance of the valley. And Camden! To the daughter of Ed Beck, the apple grower, Camden had brought *a box of apples!*—and been bewildered too, when, for all she could help it, she had had to clap a hand over her mouth and run into the house to have her giggle.

A little more than just bewildered, perhaps. Had she, or any of them, ever speculated about that? . . . He had been dumb enough before; but that was when he had started being as dumb as he was now.

Well, if he wanted to be dumb let him be dumb. Pouting her pretty lips and arching her fine brows, she forgot the unimaginative fellow and turned to the ridge again. And now, seeing the sun was quite gone, all the day's vague worries and dreads—held off by this and that—could not be held off longer. For weeks there had been so much talk, so much gossip and speculation and doubt.

"Camden," she reverted suddenly. "Tell me one thing; did you hear—"

She stopped there. Some people were coming into the kitchen yard, dark forms in the growing darkness. Most of them lingered at the porch, sitting on the steps and lighting their pipes. The one that came out was Frank, the second of her brothers-in-law. She was glad. Frank wasn't like Camden; he would talk. Turning and taking care of her skirts, she gave him a bright and sisterly smile.

"Well, Frankie, what's the crowd?"

Far from avoiding the smile, as Camden's habit was, the storekeeper returned it with a brotherly wink for good measure. "Oh, they're tired of waiting down the road, so they come up here to see the grand arrival." He was something of a man of the world; in his calling he had acquired a fine turn for skepticism. "Don't want to miss being on hand to see what flaws they can pick in 'Jim's five hundred dollars' wuth of expiriment.' "

"Frank, ain't you the least bit worried over Jim? So late?"

"Don't see why."

"All the same, I wish either you or Cam could've gone with him."

"Don't see why. Had all the men from Perry's stable there in Twinshead to help him get the animal off the freight, and he took an extra rope and the log-chain and the heavy wagon, so I guess no matter how wild and woolly the devil is he'll scarcely be climbing in over the tailboard. Besides, them Western horses ain't such a big breed; even a stallion."

"All the same—(look the other way, Frankie)—" Flipping her ankles over the rail, Blossom jumped down beside him. "Listen, Frank, tell me something; did you hear—did you hear the reason Jim's getting him cheap was because he killed a man out West there, what's-its-name, Wyoming?"

Frank was taking off his sleeve protectors, the pins in his mouth. It was Camden, at the bars, speaking in his sudden deep rough way, "Who the hell told you that?"

Frank got the pins out of his mouth. "I guess what it is, Blossie, what's mixed you up is his having that name 'Blue Murder.' "

"No sir! I got some sense and some ears. You don't go fooling me."

Frank laughed indulgently and struck her shoulder with a light hand.

"Don't you worry. Between two horsemen like Jim and Cam—"

"Don't *Cam* me! He's none of *my* horse. I told Jim once—" Breaking off, Camden hoisted his weight over the fence and stood outside, his feet spread and his hammer in both hands, an attitude that would have looked a little ludicrous had anyone been watching him.

Jim had arrived. With a clatter of hoofs and a rattle of wheels he was in the yard and come to a standstill, calling aloud as he threw the lines over the team, "Well, friends, here we are."

The curious began to edge around, closing a cautious circle. The dusk had deepened so that it was hard to make anything

at any distance of Jim's "expiriment" but a blurry silhouette anchored at the wagon's tail. The farmer put an end to it, crying from his eminence, "Now, now, clear out and don't worry him; give him some peace tonight, for Lord's sake! Git!" He jumped to the ground and began to whack his arms, chilled with driving, only to have them pinioned by Blossom's without warning.

"Oh, Jim, I'm so glad you come. I been so worried; gi' me a kiss!"

The farmer reddened, eying the cloud of witnesses. He felt awkward and wished she could have waited. "Get along, didn't I tell you fellows?" he cried with a trace of the Bluedge temper. "Go wait in the kitchen then; I'll tell you all about everything soon's I come in. . . . Well now—wife—"

"What's the matter?" she laughed, an eye over her shoulder. "Nobody's looking that matters. I'm sure Frank don't mind. And as for Camden—"

Camden wasn't looking at them. Still standing with his hammer two-fisted and his legs spread, his chin down and his thoughts to himself (the dumbhead) he was looking at Blue Murder, staring at that other dumbhead, which, raised high on the motionless column of the stallion's neck, seemed hearkening with an exile's doubt to the sounds of this new universe, tasting with wide nostrils the taint in the wind of equine strangers, and studying with eyes accustomed to far horizons these dark pastures that went up in the air.

Whatever the smith's cogitations, presently he let the hammer down and said aloud, "So you're him, eh?"

Jim had put Blossom aside, saying, "Got supper ready? I'm hungry!" Excited by the act of kissing and the sense of witnesses to it, she fussed her hair and started kitchenwards as he turned to his brothers.

"Well, what do you make of him?"

"Five hundred dollars," said Frank. "However, it's your money."

Camden was shorter. "Better put him in."

"All right; let them bars down while I and Frank lead him around."

"No thanks!" The storekeeper kept his hands in his pockets. "I just cleaned up, thanks. Cam's the boy for horses."

"He's none o' my horses!" Camden wet his lips, shook his shoulders, and scowled. "Be damned, no!" He never had the right words, and it made him mad. Hadn't he told Jim from the beginning that he washed his hands of this fool Agricultural College squandering, "and a man-killer to the bargain"?

"Unless," Frank put in slyly, "unless Cam's scared."

"Oh, is Cam scared?"

"Scared?" And still, to the brothers' enduring wonder, the big dense fellow would rise to that boyhood bait. "Scared? The hell I'm scared of any horse ever wore a shoe! Come on, I'll show you! I'll show you!"

"Well, be gentle with him, boys; he may be brittle." As Frank sauntered off around the shed he whistled the latest tune.

In the warmth and light of the kitchen he began to fool with his pretty sister-in-law, feigning princely impatience and growling with a wink at the assembled neighbors, "When do we eat?"

But she protested, "Land, I had everything ready since five, ain't I? And now if it ain't you it's them to wait for. I declare for men!"

At last one of the gossips got in a word.

"What you make of Jim's purchase, Frank?"

"Well, it's Jim's money, Darred. If *I* had the running of this farm—" Frank began drawing up chairs noisily, leaving it at that.

Darred persisted. "Don't look to me much like an animal for women and children to handle, not yet awhile."

"Cowboys han'les 'em, pa." That was Darred's ten-year-old, big-eyed.

Blossom put the kettle back, protesting, "Leave off, or you'll

get me worried to death; all your talk. . . . I declare, where *are* those bad boys?" Opening the door she called into the dark, "Jim! Cam! Land's sake!"

Subdued by distance and the intervening sheds, she could hear them at their business—sounds muffled and fragmentary, soft thunder of hoofs, snorts, puffings, and the short words of men in action: "Aw, leave him be in the paddock tonight." . . . "With them mares there, you damn fool?" . . . "Damn fool, eh? Try getting him in at that door and see who's the damn fool!" . . . "Come on, don't be so scared." . . . "Scared, eh? Scared?" . . .

Why was it she always felt that curious tightening of all her powers of attention when Camden Bluedge spoke? Probably because he spoke so rarely, and then so roughly, as if his own thickness made him mad. Never mind.

"Last call for supper in the dining-car, boys!" she called and closed the door. Turning back to the stove she was about to replace the tea water for the third time when, straightening up, she said, "What's that?"

No one else had heard anything. They looked at one another.

"Frank, go—go see what—go tell the boys to come in."

Frank hesitated, feeling foolish, then went to the door.

Then everyone in the room was out of his chair.

There were three sounds. The first was human and incoherent. The second was incoherent too, but it wasn't human. The third was a crash, a ripping and splintering of wood.

When they got to the paddock they found Camden crawling from beneath the wreckage of the fence where a gap was opened on the pasture side. He must have received a blow on the head, for he seemed dazed. He didn't seem to know they were there. At a precarious balance—one hand at the back of his neck—he stood facing up the hill, gaping after the diminuendo of floundering hoofs, invisible above.

So seconds passed. Again the beast gave tongue, a high wild

horning note, and on the black of the stony hill to the right of it a faint shower of sparks blew like fireflies where the herding mares wheeled. It seemed to awaken the dazed smith. He opened his mouth *"Almighty God!"* Swinging, he flung his arms toward the shed. *"There! There!"*

At last someone brought a lantern. They found Jim Bluedge lying on his back in the corner of the paddock near the door to the shed. In the lantern light, and still better in the kitchen when they had carried him in, they read the record of the thing which Camden, dumb in good earnest now, seemed unable to tell them with anything but his strange unfocused stare.

The bloody offense to the skull would have been enough to kill the man, but it was the second, full on the chest above the heart, that told the tale. On the caved grating of the ribs, already turning blue under the yellowish down, the iron shoe had left its mark; and when, laying back the rag of shirt, they saw that the toe of the shoe was upward and the cutting calk-ends down they knew all they wanted to know of that swift, black, crushing episode.

No outlash here of heels in fright. Here was a forefoot. An attack aimed and frontal; an onslaught reared, erect; beast turned biped; red eyes mad to white eyes aghast. . . . And only afterwards, when it was done, the blood-fright that serves the horses for conscience; the blind rush across the inclosure; the fence gone down. . . .

No one had much to say. No one seemed to know what to do.

As for Camden, he was no help. He simply stood propped on top of his logs of legs where someone had left him. From the instant when with his *"Almighty God!"* he had been brought back to memory, instead of easing its hold as the minutes passed, the event to which he remained the only living human witness seemed minute by minute to tighten its grip. It set its sweat-beaded stamp on his face, distorted his eyes, and tied his tongue. He was no good to anyone.

As for Blossom, even now—perhaps more than ever now—her dependence on physical touch was the thing that ruled her. Down on her knees beside the lamp they had set on the floor, she plucked at one of the dead man's shoes monotonously, and as it were idly swaying the toe like an inverted pendulum from side to side. That was all. Not a word. And when Frank, the only one of the three with any sense, got her up finally and led her away to her room, she clung to *him.*

It was lucky that Frank was a man of affairs. His brother was dead, and frightfully dead, but there was tomorrow for grief. Just now there were many things to do. There were people to be gotten rid of. With short words and angry gestures he cleared them out, all but Darred and a man named White, and to these he said, "Now first thing, Jim can't stay here." He ran and got a blanket from a closet. "Give me a hand and we'll lay him in the ice house over night. Don't sound good, but it's best, poor fellow. Cam, come along!"

He waited a moment, and as he studied the wooden fool the blood poured back into his face. "Wake up, Cam! You great big scared stiff, you!"

Camden brought his eyes out of nothingness and looked at his brother. A twinge passed over his face, convulsing the mouth muscles. "Scared?"

"Yes, you're scared!" Frank's lip lifted, showing the tips of his teeth. "And I'll warrant you something: if you wasn't the scared stiff you was, this hellish damn thing wouldn't have happened, maybe. Scared! you a blacksmith! Scared of a horse!"

"*Horse!*" Again that convulsion of the mouth muscles, something between irony and an idiot craft. "Why don't you go catch 'im?"

"Hush it! Don't waste time by going loony now, for God's sake. Come!"

"My advice to anybody—" Camden looked crazier than ever, knotting his brows. "My advice to anybody is to let some-

body else go catch that—that—" Opening the door he faced out into the night, his head sunk between his shoulders and the fingers working at the ends of his hanging arms; and before they knew it he began to swear. They could hardly hear because his teeth were locked and his breath soft. There were all the vile words he had ever heard in his life, curses and threats and abominations, vindictive, violent, obscene. He stopped only when at a sharp word from Frank he was made aware that Blossom had come back into the room. Even then he didn't seem to comprehend her return but stood blinking at her, and at the rifle she carried, with his distraught bloodshot eyes.

Frank comprehended. Hysteria had followed the girl's blankness. Stepping between her and the body on the floor, he spoke in a persuasive, unhurried way. "What you doing with that gun, Blossie? Now, now, you don't want that gun, you know you don't."

It worked. Her rigidity lessened appreciably. Confusion gained.

"Well, but— Oh, Frank—well, but when we going to shoot him?"

"Yes, yes, Blossie—now, yes—only you best give me that gun; that's the girlie." When he had got the weapon he put an arm around her shoulders. "Yes, yes, course we're going to shoot him; what you think? Don't want an animal like that running around. Now first thing in the morning—"

Hysteria returned. With its strength she resisted his leading.

"No, now! *Now!* He's gone and killed Jim! Killed my husband! I won't have him left alive another minute! I won't! *Now!* No sir, I'm going myself, I am! Frank, I am! *Cam!*"

At his name, appealed to in that queer screeching way, the man in the doorway shivered all over, wet his lips, and walked out into the dark.

"There, you see?" Frank was quick to capitalize anything. "Cam's gone to do it. Cam's gone, Blossie! . . . Here, one of

you— Darred, take this gun and run give it to Camden, that's the boy."

"You sure he'll kill him, Frank? You *sure?*"

"Sure as daylight. Now you come along back to your room like a good girl and get some rest. Come, I'll go with you."

When Frank returned to the kitchen ten minutes later, Darred was back.

"Well, now, let's get at it and carry out poor Jim; he can't lay here. . . . Where's Cam gone *now,* damn him!"

"Cam? Why, he's gone and went."

"Went where?"

"Up the pasture, like you said."

"Like I—" Frank went an odd color. He walked to the door. Between the light on the sill and the beginnings of the stars where the woods crowned the mountain was all one blackness. One stillness too. He turned on Darred. "But look, you never gave him that gun, even."

"He didn't want it."

"Lord's sake; what did he say?"

"Said nothing. He'd got the log-chain out of the wagon and when I caught him he was up hunting his hammer in under that wreck at the fence. Once he found it he started off up. 'Cam,' says I, 'here's a gun; want it?' He seemed not to. Just went on walking on up."

"How'd he look?"

"Look same's you seen him looking. Sick."

"The damned fool!" . . .

Poor dead Jim! Poor fool Camden! As the storekeeper went about his business and afterwards when, the ice house door closed on its tragic tenant and White and Darred had gone off home, he roamed the yard, driven here and there, soft-footed, waiting, hearkening—his mind was for a time not his own property but the plaything of thoughts diverse and wayward. Jim, his brother, so suddenly and so violently gone. The stallion. That beast that had kicked him to death. With anger

and hate and pitiless impatience of time he thought of the morrow, when they would catch him and take their revenge with guns and clubs. Behind these speculations, covering the background of his consciousness and stringing his nerves to endless vigil, spread the wall of the mountain: silent from instant to instant but devising under its black silence (who-could-know-what instant to come) a neigh, a yell, a spark-line of iron hoofs on rolling flints, a groan. And still behind that and deeper into the borders of the unconscious, the storekeeper thought of the farm that had lost its master, the rich bottoms, the broad well-stocked pastures, the fat barns, and the comfortable house whose chimneys and gable-ends fell into changing shapes of perspective against the stars as he wandered here and there. . . .

Jim gone. . . . And Camden, at any moment . . .

His face grew hot. An impulse carried him a dozen steps. "I ought to go up. Ought to take the gun and go up." But there shrewd sanity put on the brakes. "Where's the use? Couldn't find him in this dark. Besides, I oughtn't to leave Blossom here alone."

With that he went around toward the kitchen, thinking to go in. But the sight of the lantern, left burning out near the sheds, sent his ideas off on another course. At any rate it would give his muscles and nerves something to work on. Taking the lantern and entering the paddock, he fell to patching the gap into the pasture, using broken boards from the wreck. As he worked his eyes chanced to fall on footprints in the dung-mixed earth—Camden's footprints, leading away beyond the little ring of light. And beside them, taking off from the landing-place of that prodigious leap, he discerned the trail of the stallion. After a moment he got down on his knees where the earth was softest, holding the lantern so that its light fell full.

He gave over his fence-building. Returning to the house his gait was no longer that of the roamer; his face, caught by

the periodic flare of the swinging lantern, was the face of another man. In its expression there was a kind of fright and a kind of calculating eagerness. He looked at the clock on the kitchen shelf, shook it, and read it again. He went to the telephone and fumbled at the receiver. He waited till his hand quit shaking, then removed it from the hook.

"Listen, Darred," he said, when he had got the farmer at last, "get White and whatever others you can and come over first thing it's light. Come a-riding and bring your guns. No, Cam ain't back."

He heard Blossom calling. Outside her door he passed one hand down over his face, as he might have passed a wash-rag, to wipe off what was there. Then he went in.

"What's the matter with Blossie? Can't sleep?"

"No, I can't sleep. Can't think. Can't sleep. Oh, Frankie!"

He sat down beside the bed.

"Oh, Frankie, Frankie, *hold my hand!*"

She looked almost homely, her face bleached out and her hair in a mess on the pillow. But she would get over that. And the short sleeve of the nightgown on the arm he held was edged with pretty lace.

"Got your watch here?" he asked. She gave it to him from under the pillow. This too he shook as if he couldn't believe it was going.

Pretty Blossom Beck. Here for a wonder he sat in her bedroom and held her hand. One brother was dead and the other was on the mountain.

But little by little, as he sat and dreamed so, nightmare crept over his brain. He had to arouse and shake himself. He had to set his thoughts resolutely in other roads. . . . Perhaps there would be even the smithy. The smithy, the store, the farm. Complete. The farm, the farmhouse, the room in the farmhouse, the bed in the room, the wife in the bed. Complete beyond belief. If . . . Worth dodging horror for. If . . .

"Frank, has Cam come back?"

"Cam? Don't you worry about Cam. . . . Where's that watch again?" . . .

Far from rounding up their quarry in the early hours after dawn, it took the riders, five of them, till almost noon simply to make certain that he wasn't to be found—not in any of the pastures. Then when they discovered the hole in the fence far up in the woods beyond the crest where Blue Murder had led the mares in a break for the open country of hills and ravines to the south, they were only at the beginning.

The farmers had left their work undone at home and, as the afternoon lengthened and with it the shadows in the hollow places, they began to eye one another behind their leader's back. Yet they couldn't say it; there was something in the storekeeper's air today, something zealous and pitiless and fanatical, that shut them up and pulled them plodding on.

Frank did the trailing. Hopeless of getting anywhere before sundown in that unkempt wilderness of a hundred square miles of scrub, his companions slouched in their saddles and rode more and more mechanically, knee to knee, and it was he who made the casts to recover the lost trail and, dismounting to read the dust, cried back, "He's still with 'em," and with gestures of imperious excitement beckoned them on.

"Which you mean?" Darred asked him once. "Cam, or the horse?"

Frank wheeled his beast and spurred back at the speaker. It was extraordinary. "You don't know what you're talking about!" he cried, with a causelessness and a disordered vehemence which set them first staring, then speculating. "Come on, you dumbheads; don't talk—*ride!*"

By the following day, when it was being told in all the farmhouses, the story might vary in details and more and more as the tellings multiplied, but in its fundamentals it remained the same. In one thing they certainly all agreed: they used the same expression—"It was like Frank was drove. Drove in a race against something, and no sparing the whip."

They were a good six miles to the south of the fence. Already the road back home would have to be followed three parts in the dark.

Darred was the spokesman. "Frank, I'm going to call it a day."

The others reined up with him but the man ahead rode on. He didn't seem to hear. Darred lifted his voice. "Come on, call it a day, Frank. Tomorrow, maybe. But you see we've run it out and they're not here."

"Wait," said Frank over his shoulder, still riding on into the pocket.

White's mount—a mare—laid back her ears, shied, and stood trembling. After a moment she whinnied.

It was as if she had whinnied for a dozen. A crashing in the woods above them to the left and the avalanche came—down-streaming, erupting, wheeling, wheeling away with volleying snorts, a dark rout.

Darred, reining his horse, began to shout, "Here they go this way, Frank!" But Frank was yelling, "Up here, boys! This way, quick!"

It was the same note, excited, feverish, disordered, breaking like a child's. When they neared him they saw he was off his horse, rifle in hand, and down on his knees to study the ground where the woods began. By the time they reached his animal the impetuous fellow had started up into the cover, his voice trailing, "Come on; spread out and come on!"

One of the farmers got down. When he saw the other three keeping their saddles he swung up again.

White spoke this time. "Be darned if I do!" He lifted a protesting hail, "Come back here, Frank! You're crazy! It's getting dark!"

It was Frank's own fault. They told him plainly to come back and he wouldn't listen.

For a while they could hear his crackle in the mounting underbrush. Then that stopped, whether he had gone too far for their ears or whether he had come to a halt to give his own

ears a chance. . . . Once, off to his right, a little higher up under the low ceiling of the trees that darkened moment by moment with the rush of night, they heard another movement, another restlessness of leaves and stones. Then that was still, and everything was still.

Darred ran a sleeve over his face and swung down. "God alive, boys!"

It was the silence. All agreed there—the silence and the deepening dusk.

The first they heard was the shot. No voice. Just the one report. Then after five breaths of another silence a crashing of growth, a charge in the darkness under the withered scrub, continuous and diminishing.

They shouted, "Frank!" No answer. They called, "*Frank Bluedge!*"

Now, since they had to, they did. Keeping contact by word, and guided partly by directional memory (and mostly in the end by luck), after a time they found the storekeeper in a brake of ferns, lying across his gun.

They got him down to the open, watching behind them all the while. Only then, by the flares of successive matches, under the noses of the snorting horses, did they look for the damage done.

They remembered the stillness and the gloom; it must have been quite black in there. The attack had come from behind —equine and pantherine at once, and planned and cunning. A deliberate lunge with a forefoot again: the shoe which had crushed the backbone between the shoulder blades was a foreshoe; that much they saw by the match flares in the red wreck.

They took no longer getting home than they had to, but it was longer than they would have wished. With Frank across his own saddle, walking their horses and with one or another ahead to pick the road (it was going to rain, and even the stars were lost), they made no more than a creeping speed.

None of them had much to say on the journey. Finding the break in the boundary fence and feeling through the last of the woods, the lights of their farms began to show in the pool of blackness below, and Darred uttered a part of what had lain in the minds of them all during the return:

"Well, that leaves Cam."

None followed it up. None cared to go any closer than he was to the real question. Something new, alien, menacing and pitiless had come into the valley of their lives with that beast they had never really seen; they felt its oppression, every one, and kept the real question back in their minds: "*Does* it leave Cam?"

It answered itself. Camden was at home when they got there.

He had come in a little before them, empty-handed. Empty-headed too. When Blossom, who had waited all day, part of the time with neighbor women who had come in and part of the time alone to the point of going mad—when she saw him coming down the pasture, his feet stumbling and his shoulders dejected, her first feeling was relief. Her first words, however were, "Did you get him, Cam?" And all he would answer was, "Gi'me something to eat, can't you? Gi'me a few hours' sleep, can't you? Then wait!"

He looked as if he would need more than a few hours' sleep. Propped on his elbows over his plate, it seemed as though his eyes would close before his mouth would open.

His skin was scored by thorns and his shirt was in ribbons under the straps of his iron-sagged apron; but it was not by these marks that his twenty-odd hours showed: it was by his face. While yet his eyes were open and his wits still half awake, his face surrendered. The flesh relaxed into lines of stupor, a putty-formed, putty-colored mask of sleep.

Once he let himself be aroused. This was when, to an abstracted query as to Frank's whereabouts, Blossom told him Frank had been out with four others since dawn. He heaved

clear of the table and opened his eyes at her, showing the red around the rims.

He spoke with the thick tongue of a drunkard. "If anybody but me lays hand on that stallion I'll kill him. I'll wring his neck."

Then he relapsed into his stupidity, and not even the arrival of the party bringing his brother's body seemed able to shake him so far clear of it again.

At first, when they had laid Frank on the floor where on the night before they had laid Jim, he seemed hardly to comprehend.

"What's wrong with Frank?"

"Some more of Jim's 'expiriment.' "

"Frank see him? He's scared, Frank is. Look at his face there."

"He's dead, Cam."

"Dead, you say? Frank dead? Dead of fright; is that it?"

Even when, rolling the body over they showed him what was what, he appeared incapable of comprehension, of amazement, of passion, or of any added grief. He looked at them all with a kind of befuddled protest. Returning to his chair and his plate, he grumbled, "Le'me eat first, can't you? Can't you gi'me a little time to sleep?"

"Well, you wouldn't do much tonight anyway, I guess."

At White's words Blossom opened her mouth for the first time.

"No, nothing tonight, Cam. Cam! *Camden!* Say! Promise!"

"And then tomorrow, Cam, what we'll do is to get every last man in the valley, and we'll go at this right. We'll lay hand on that devil—"

Camden swallowed his mouthful of cold steak with difficulty. His obsession touched, he showed them the rims of his eyes again.

"You do and I'll wring your necks. The man that touches that animal before I do gets his neck wrang. That's all you need to remember."

"Yes, yes—no—that is—" Poor Blossom. "Yes, Mr. White, thanks; no, Cam's not going out tonight. . . . No, Cam, nobody's going to interfere—nor nothing. Don't you worry there. . . ."

Again poor Blossom! Disaster piled too swiftly on disaster; no discipline but instinct left. Caught in fire and flood and earthquake and not knowing what to come, and no creed but "save him who can!"—by hook or crook of wile or smile. With the valley of her life emptied out, and its emptiness repeopled monstrously and pressing down black on the roof under which (now that Frank was gone to the ice house too and the farmers back home) one brother was left of three—she would tread softly, she would talk or she would be dumb, as her sidelong glimpses of the awake-asleep man's face above the table told her was the instant's need; or if he would eat, she would magic out of nothing something, anything; or if he would sleep, he could sleep, so long as he slept in that house where she could know he was sleeping.

Only one thing. If she could touch him. If she could touch and cling.

Lightning filled the windows. After a moment the thunder came avalanching down the pasture and brought up against the clapboards of the house. At this she was behind his chair. She put out a hand. She touched his shoulder. The shoulder was bare, the shirt ripped away; it was caked with sweat and with the blackening smears of scratches, but for all its exhaustion and dirt it was flesh alive—a living man to touch.

Camden blundered up. "What the hell!" He started off two steps and wheeled on her. "Why don't you get off to bed, for Goll sake!"

"Yes, Cam, yes—right off, yes."

"Well, *I'm* going, I can tell you. For Goll sake, I need some sleep!"

"Yes, that's right, yes, Cam, good night, Cam—only—only you promise—promise you won't go out—nowheres."

"Go *out?* Not likely I won't! Not *likely!* Get along."

It took her no time to get along then—quick and quiet as a mouse.

Camden lingered to stand at one of the windows where the lightning came again, throwing the black barns and paddocks at him from the white sweep of the pastures crowned by woods.

As it had taken her no time to go, it took Blossom no time to undress and get in bed. When Camden was on his way to his room he heard her calling, "Cam! Just a second, Cam!"

In the dark outside her door he drew one hand down over his face, wiping off whatever might be there. Then he entered.

"Yes? What?"

"Cam, set by me a minute, won't you? And Cam, oh Cam, hold my hand."

As he slouched down, his fist inclosing her fingers, thoughts awakened and ran and fastened on things. They fastened, tentatively at first, upon the farm. Jim gone. Frank gone. The smithy, the store, and the farm. The whole of Mill Crossing. The trinity. The three in one. . . .

"Tight, Cam, for pity's sake! Hold it tight!"

His eyes, falling to his fist, strayed up along the arm it held. The sleeve, rumpled near the shoulder, was trimmed with pretty lace. . . .

"Tighter, Cam!"

A box of apples. That memory hidden away in the cellar of his mind. Hidden away, clamped down in the dark, till the noxious vapors, the murderous vapors of its rotting had filled the shut-up house he was. . . . A box of red apples for the applegrower's girl . . . the girl who sniggered and ran away from him to laugh at him. . . .

And here, by the unfolding of a devious destiny, he sat in that girl's bedroom, holding that girl's hand. Jim who had got her, Frank who had wanted her lay side by side out there in the ice house under the lightning. While he, the "dumb one" —the last to be thought of with anything but amusement and

the last to be feared—his big hot fist inclosing her imprecating hand now, and his eyes on the pretty lace at her shoulder—He jumped up with a gulp and a clatter of iron.

"What the—" He flung her hand away. "What the—hell!" He swallowed. "Damn you, Blossie Beck!" He stared at her with repugnance and mortal fright. "Why, you—you—you—"

He moderated his voice with an effort, wiping his brow, "Good night. You must excuse me, Blossie; I wasn't meaning—I mean— I hope you sleep good. *I* shall. . . . Good night!"

In his own brain was the one word "Hurry!"

She lay and listened to his boots going along the hall and heard the closing of his door. She ought to have put out the lamp. But even with the shades drawn, the lightning around the edges of the window unnerved her; in the dark alone it would have been more than she could bear.

She lay so till she felt herself nearing exhaustion from the sustained rigidity of her limbs. Rain came and with the rain, wind. Around the eaves it neighed like wild stallions; down the chimneys it moaned like men.

Slipping out of bed and pulling on a bathrobe she ran from her room, barefooted, and along the hall to Camden's door.

"Cam!" she called. "Oh, Cam!" she begged. "Please, please!"

And now he wouldn't answer her.

New lightning, diffused through all the sky by the blown rain, ran at her along the corridor. She pushed the door open. The lamp was burning on the bureau but the room was empty and the bed untouched.

Taking the lamp she skittered down to the kitchen. No one there. . . .

"*Hurry!*"

Camden had reached the woods when the rain came. Lighting the lantern he had brought, he made his way on to the boundary fence. There, about a mile to the east of the path the others had taken that day, he pulled the rails down and

tumbled the stones together in a pile. Then he proceeded another hundred yards, holding the lantern high and peering through the streaming crystals of the rain.

Blue Murder was there. Neither the chain nor the sapling had given way. The lantern and, better than the lantern, a globe of lightning, showed the tethered stallion glistening and quivering, his eyes all whites at the man's approach.

"Gentle, boy; steady, boy!" Talking all the while in the way he had with horses, Camden put a hand on the taut chain and bore with a gradually progressive weight, bringing the dark head nearer. "Steady, boy; gentle there, damn you; gentle!"

Was he afraid of horses? Who was it said he was afraid of horses?

The beast's head was against the man's chest, held there by an arm thrown over the bowed neck. As he smoothed the forehead and fingered the nose with false caresses, Camden's "horse talk" ran on—the cadence one thing, the words another.

"Steady, Goll damn you; you're going to get yours. Cheer up, cheer up, the worst is yet to come. Come now! Come easy! Come along!"

When he had unloosed the chain, he felt for and found with his free hand his hammer hidden behind the tree. Throwing the lantern into the brush, where it flared for an instant before dying, he led the stallion back as far as the break he had made in the fence. Taking a turn with the chain around the animal's nose, like an improvised hackamore, he swung from the stone pile to the slippery back. A moment's shying, a sliding caracole of amazement and distrust, a crushing of knees, a lash of the chain-end, and that was all there was to that. Blue Murder had been ridden before. . . .

In the smithy, chambered in the roaring of the falls and the swish and shock of the storm, Camden sang as he pumped his bellows, filling the cave beneath the rafters with red. The air

was nothing, the words were mumbo-jumbo, but they swelled his chest. His eyes, cast from time to time at his wheeling prisoner, had lost their look of helplessness and surly distraction.

Scared? He? No, no, no! Now that he wasn't any longer afraid of time, he wasn't afraid of anything on earth.

"Shy, you devil!" He wagged his exalted head. "Whicker, you hellion! Whicker all you want to, stud horse! Tomorrow they're going to get you, the numb fools! Tomorrow they can have you. *I* got you *tonight!*"

He was more than other men; he was enormous. Fishing an iron shoe from that inseparable apron pocket of his, he thrust it into the coals and blew and blew. He tried it and it was burning red. He tried it again and it was searing white. Taking it out on the anvil he began to beat it, swinging his hammer one-handed, gigantic. So in the crimson light, irradiating iron sparks, he was at his greatest. Pounding, pounding. A man in the dark of night with a hammer about him can do wonders; with a horseshoe about him he can cover up a sin. And if the dark of night in a paddock won't hold it, then the dark of undergrowth on a mountainside will. . . .

Pounding, pounding; thinking, thinking, in a great halo of hot stars. Feeding his hungry, his insatiable muscles.

"Steady now, you blue bastard! Steady, boy!"

What he did not realize in his feverish exaltation was that his muscles were not insatiable. In the thirty-odd hours past they had had a feast spread before them and they had had their fill. . . . More than their fill.

As with the scorching iron in his tongs he approached the stallion, he had to step over the nail-box he had stepped over five thousand times in the routine of every day.

A box of apples, eh? Apples to snigger at, eh? But whose girl are you now? . . . Scared, eh?

His foot was heavier of a sudden than it should have been. This five thousand and first time, by the drag of the tenth of an inch, the heel caught the lip of the nail-box.

He tried to save himself from stumbling. At the same time, instinctively, he held the iron flame in his tongs away.

There was a scream out of a horse's throat; a whiff of hair and burnt flesh.

There was a lash of something in the red shadows. There was another sound and another wisp of stench. . . .

When, guided by the stallion's whinnying, they found the smith next day, they saw by the cant of his head that his neck was broken, and they perceived that he too had on him the mark of a shoe. It lay up one side of his throat and the broad of a cheek. It wasn't blue this time, however—it was red. It took them some instants in the sunshine pouring through the wide door to comprehend this phenomenon. It wasn't sunk in by a blow this time; it was burned in, a brand.

Darred called them to look at the stallion, chained behind the forge.

"Almighty God!" The words sounded funny in his mouth. They sounded the funnier in that they were the same ones the blundering smith had uttered when, staring uphill from his clever wreckage of the paddock fence, he had seen the mares striking sparks from the stones where the stallion struck none. And he, of all men, a smith!

"Almighty God!" called Darred. "What you make of these here feet?"

One fore-hoof was freshly pared for shoeing; the other three hoofs were as virgin as any yearling's on the plains. Blue Murder had never been shod. . . .

VINCENT SHEEAN

The Conqueror

WHEN THE GENERAL ASKED Marie-Honorée to dinner the first time she ignored the invitation. On the second occasion, two or three weeks later, she sent a frigidly polite note to say that she was no longer dining out. After another month had passed he asked her again, and this time she felt constrained to accept. "After all," she reflected, "I am to all intents and purposes a prisoner: it is a kind of duty that I owe my jailers." So she wrote another note to the general, informing him that she would dine with him at half-past eight.

The circumstances were, to say the least, peculiar. There she was, living in a maid's room at the top of her own house, with the general and nineteen other officers in occupation of all the rest. They had not molested her in any way: they had simply taken possession, and she had been given not quite a full day to move her personal belongings and papers. It had all been done very efficiently by a severe young officer from the Kommandantur, working on a list of householders and living quarters, and she had not even seen the general or his officers. And in all these weeks she had still never seen them. She took good care of that—slipping out by the back way whenever she had to leave the house, never going even into the hall at the head of the marble stairs, and of course never

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setting foot on the marble stairs themselves. One of the maids in the house helped her settle into her new quarters, and after that she fended for herself. Her servants (those who had not left Paris before the Germans arrived) were much too busy now to do anything for her.

But Marie-Honorée was perfectly able to take care of herself. Gentle and exquisite as she always seemed to be, she was in fact a woman of intelligence with considerable business acumen and practical common sense in all the affairs of life. It used to be said that she had a harder and better head for such things than her husband Paul, who was now a prisoner somewhere in Germany. Before the war Marie-Honorée had conducted negotiations in the wine business with more than usual success—always in the name of her husband and in his presence—and had also done very tidily indeed in a small, very smart perfumery establishment out by the Place Victor Hugo. People who saw in her merely the lovely Marquise de Quiberon, passing gracefully across the scene of culture and society—such as these were—in the 1930s, had an incomplete notion of her character and gifts. Her better friends knew better: they tended to say with a laugh: "Oh, the thing's bound to go well if Marie-Honorée is running it. That girl can do anything."

She had taken hold of the Quiberon estates down in the Bordeaux wine country and worked them into a better imitation of solvency than they had been able to give for a generation or two. And the house in Paris, that very house which was now the abode of the German general and nineteen other officers, had been her creation. She had always known artists and people of that kind, people of taste; she knew how to accept their work as a sort of homage, even when she paid for it. Her big salon was famous in Paris—in her kind of Paris, anyhow—for its astute combinations and arrangements of white and gray and silver, "modern" enough without being actually dangerous to life or limb and beautiful without a sense of dis-

use. You had no hesitation about sitting down in any of the chairs there, and the rugs were not too delicate to sustain contact with the shod human foot. The whole house was innocent of snakeskin or ostrich feathers, and there were not too many of anything—chairs, pictures, lamps, or musical instruments —in any room.

This lovely, temperate quality was the flower (one flower, at least) of a whole culture and did not betray, in the subtle simplicity of its surface, how numerous and complex were its elements. So true was this that even the German officers liked the house or said they did, in spite of the fact that it was just about the most French thing in Paris. In the German general's first note to Marie-Honorée he had written:

"Madame la Marquise, my officers and I appreciate the use of your beautiful house and wish for the honor of your acquaintance. We hope that you will dine with us tonight at eight o'clock."

This was the note she ignored. It was signed General Graf von Thaunburg, with the name and number of a Hanover infantry division.

The second note was signed also with his Christian names, which appeared to be Otto Helmuth, and the military rank beneath. It said, in correct French:

"Madame la Marquise, my officers have greatly admired your portrait in the great salon and have begged me to renew my invitation to dinner, so that we may have the honor of your acquaintance. If you agree we shall dine at half-past eight, as I believe this hour to be more in accordance with your custom. Accept the assurance of my profound esteem."

To this she replied in a note containing one sentence, remitted by old Annette, the maid who lived in the adjoining attic room. The sentence was: *"The Marquise de Quiberon regrets that she is unable to accept any invitations to dinner under the present circumstances."*

The third note from the general was phrased as follows:

"Madame la Marquise, at the risk of being importunate I should like again to renew my request for the honor of your company at dinner. I well understand your reluctance to accept and can only beg that you make an effort to overcome it, since the present circumstances have caused us to be housed under your roof. You will find my officers deeply appreciative of the honor you do us. I leave to you the choice of the day and hour. Accept the assurance of my homage and esteem.

Otto Helmuth von Thaunburg."

To this Marie-Honorée sent back a note by Annette:

"The Marquise de Quiberon acknowledges the invitation of M. le Comte de Thaunburg and will dine with him at half-past eight on tomorrow, Wednesday, evening."

In writing *"will dine with him,"* she used the phrase *diner à chez lui,* as if the house belonged to him. The shade of meaning was one which she hoped would not escape him.

That evening she started to tell the story to some of her friends and found herself laughing harder than she had laughed since before May, 1940. They were gathered in a room inhabited by one of the Quiberon relations; there were six or seven of them, women who met together to knit or sew; most of them had husbands or brothers in the German prison camps, and all had seen enough human suffering in the last few months to dry up the springs of laughter; but they all laughed helplessly. Marie-Honorée had the actual notes to show them.

"Mon Dieu, mon Dieu," said Louise, one of the cousins, wiping her eyes, "it's something straight out of the eighteenth century. I haven't seen such language since I used to have to write model letters in the convent."

"You should have asked him to send you a beefsteak, Marie-Honorée," another cousin pointed out. "After all, language is cheap, and if you actually go to the dinner you'll probably be unable to eat anything. I should ask for some steak or a big pot roast, sent up to your room."

"Or some of the butter and chocolate they are carting off to Germany," another said.

"Or tell them you'll compromise on a sandwich if they'll give one decent meal to your husband in the prison camp," said another.

"No," Marie-Honorée said, "I shall be just as eighteenth-century as he is. And I shall ask him for nothing, absolutely nothing. It would be no use, in any case."

"Do you mean to say you actually mean to *go?*" Louise demanded. "It's madness. You don't know what they'll do. I should be frightened to death."

"Well, I am a little frightened," Marie-Honorée admitted, "but I think I shall be able to manage. After all, they are the conquerors. They could order me out of the house altogether, and then where could I go? I have little enough money as it is without having to pay rent too."

"I wonder what they'll give you for dinner," said old Mme. de Beaupré, who had always been very fond of food. Her blue eyes were slightly dreamy. "I know what I should like: duck with orange sauce. And a soufflé afterward, made with pineapple, you know, like the ones old Joseph used to give us."

"I would have a very thick *filet mignon,*" said Louise. "Duck is no good if you're hungry. But the chances are you'll get sauerkraut."

"There have been days in these past weeks when I should have been glad to get some sauerkraut," Marie-Honorée said. "But it won't be that: it'll be the best French cooking. I know; Annette tells me about it. She even smuggles a little food upstairs now and then, but of course I don't eat it."

"Of course not," Madame de Beaupré said virtuously. "Still, what kind of food is it? Does she ever get butter?"

"Sometimes," said Marie-Honorée.

"I should never dream of eating their food," said Mme. de Beaupré, "but butter—well, butter seems a little different,

somehow. I am not sure that I wouldn't accept a little butter now and then if I were in your position."

"The terrifying thing," said Marie-Honorée, "is the conversation at dinner. What on earth can I find to talk to them about?"

Louise, who was not without a trace of envy for her more brilliant cousin, settled that question.

"You've never been at a loss yet, Marie-Honorée," she said. "I think it will take more than a Hanoverian general to silence you. Now I've run out of gray wool. Is there any more in that bag over there?"

On the day of the dinner Marie-Honorée, aided from time to time by Annette, spent a great deal of time inspecting her wardrobe. She had worn no evening dress—indeed no very assertive garments—for some months, and the prospect of appearing before the conquerors filled her, at first, with alarm. But as she picked and chose, slowly piecing together the full complement of her night's requirements, confidence began to return. After all, these were beautiful clothes, acknowledged to be the best Paris could produce before the war; and in all probability General Count von Thaunburg and his officers had never seen anything like them.

Marie-Honorée had been famous, in her own world, for the clothes she wore and the way she wore them. She was a graceful, slightly insinuating figure, who seemed to slip over a floor rather than to walk; she tended to elect clinging and trailing garments of delicate color and with a minimum of ornament. Her shiny fair hair was nearly always knotted loosely at the neck, in artful simplicity, and without decoration; if she wore jewels at all it was likely to be earrings. After hours of deliberation she determined upon her costume for the night. She would go in full regalia, as for the Elysée or the British Embassy in the old days, with the longest train she possessed. It was a dress of innumerable softly shifting hues between silver and green,

with a serpentine train of silver, narrow and long, originating not at shoulder or waist but almost at her heels. She had spent weeks upon its architecture in the old days: it had been a great dress, a very important dress, the triumph of a celebrated old house in the Rue de la Paix. She had evolved it for the visit of George VI and Queen Elizabeth to Paris, in the old days, a century or two ago, in 1938. It would serve now in a different purpose, but it would serve.

Punctually at twenty-seven minutes past eight Marie-Honorée left the corridor where the maids' rooms were and opened the door to the top landing of the grand staircase. She had not been there for months. The reflections of all the lights on the marble below made her pause for a moment. The staircase was in two flights, the lower one very broad and grand, the upper less imposing: it led to the rooms which had once been Marie-Honorée's but were now occupied by General Count von Thaunburg. She took a deep breath, restrained her nervous fingers from their instinctive flutter, put out one hand to the balustrade and began to descend. She was quite well aware that she had not taken four steps before the household below became aware of her approach. Through the carved white marble of the balustrade she could see the German officers coming out of the drawing room and standing there in the great hall, waiting. For a second or two she felt slightly dizzy: it was so far down there, such a long journey, and her knees were shaking with weakness.

The last part was the most difficult. That was the grand staircase proper, the real thing: it was made of very broad, shallow steps, and from the last landing it was all in full view of the waiting officers. Marie-Honorée moved slowly, her hand just touching the balustrade, her silver train rustling softly over the stairs behind her. Only a few more steps, and she would be at the end: was it possible that her own staircase could be so strange, so cold, and so long?

An officer advanced, reached for her hand. She was at the

foot of the stairs, lingering on the last step, curiously reluctant to set foot among them; she gave him her hand, and he bent low over it. His mustache brushed the soft skin, and she repressed a little involuntary movement of the shoulders.

"Madame la Marquise," the officer said, "you do us very great honor. Let me present my officers."

This, then, was General Count von Thaunburg: a tall man, stiff and uncomfortable, with decorations ranged on his breast. His eyes were a burning blue, of which she became conscious almost at once. He had a single eyeglass which he sometimes replaced in his eye and sometimes allowed to dangle on a black silk cord, but with or without it, his eyes had curious power. Marie-Honorée did not wholly dislike their intentness, but it was impossible to know what store of thought or feeling lay behind them.

The other officers bowed, each in turn, and kissed her hand. It was like a royal progress round a room. As they bowed they clicked their heels together very audibly with a resounding crack. She was afraid to speak, for fear she might laugh or cry; either would have been disastrous. She merely inclined her head and smiled, slightly bowed and smiled again, lifting her hand mechanically to the alien lips in her own house, smiling a little more or a little less, and saying nothing. The general walked beside her, repeating a list of names that crackled barbarically in her ears: *Von Glueckwald-Minneberg, Zerbstheim, Dornschuld, Windischlohn-Lanz.* . . . They were of all ages, two or three of them hardly more than children, with a terrifying precision in the way they clicked their heels. The louder the click of the heels, she reflected confusedly, the more candid the blue glance that followed when the hand kissing was over. She thought of Paul, her husband, and of the prison camp where he would be eating his dinner tonight. The general gave her his arm, and they passed through the great open doors from the hall to the salon, her own salon. On a table near the fireplace was the huge silver tray with the sherry things on

it. My little Venetian glasses, she thought; they are using my little Venetian glasses for sherry. Well, why not? They won the war.

"Thank you, M. le Comte," she said, accepting some sherry. "I hope you and your officers are comfortable in this house? This is a rather charming room, I always thought. Some of our best artists worked on it."

The general's intent blue eyes never left her face.

"We appreciate the beauty of your house very much," he said. "We have long wished to express our appreciation. That portrait, there, which we have so much admired—permit me to say that we admire it less now, madame. It does not do you justice."

"It *is* rather nice, I think," said Marie-Honorée. "The painter is—well, the painter is not here any more. He was one of our best."

"I know something of the Quiberon family," the general said. "If I am not mistaken one of them married a Thaunburg in the eighteenth century."

"How delightful!" said Marie-Honorée. "Then we are, in fact, relations?"

"In a distant degree, yes," said the general. "There was a young Thaunburg countess who came here in the Prussian embassy, at one interval between wars, and she married a Quiberon. I shall have all the details investigated and forwarded to you if the subject is of interest."

"You are exceedingly kind," said Marie-Honorée. "I have an aunt, Mme. de Beaupré, who is particularly intelligent in these genealogical matters. She will no doubt be able to fit in your information to the family tradition. I confess I know very little about such things. There are some books in the library that might interest you—a history of the family, I believe."

"I have already studied it with some care," said the general. . . . "It seems that our dinner is ready. Shall we go in?"

Marie-Honorée sat at the head of her own table, as in a

dream, and looked down the long double line of gray-clad officers.

Her dishes and her linen, but only her second-best silver . . . Under the surface of her mind, as she smiled and talked, she wondered if they had found the best silver yet; it was buried at the château down in Gascony, where the wine came from; all that country was occupied now by the conquerors, and perhaps they had dug up the best silver too. It was Orleans Regency, and very beautiful: she could see its slender, frail old forks now against the linen and lace of this table. They were using the Empire silver tonight, and old glasses from Bohemia and new glasses from Sweden; there were roses in a broad, low centerpiece of Lalique glass; she wondered if they had broken many dishes.

The general was talking about music. It seemed that he was fond of music and out of sheer politeness tried to dig up from his memory something good to be said of French operas and symphonies. Marie-Honorée came to his rescue with a swift, graceful babble about Salzburg and Bayreuth and Berlin: she had heard all the music that was going in the 1930s, and could talk about it with familiar affection, although as she listened to her own voice, it seemed to come from somewhere very far away. Was it possible that she had ever gone to Salzburg—or that such a place as Salzburg had ever existed? She looked down the table and saw many pairs of blue eyes steadily fixed upon her. The younger officers talked in subdued tones in German; those sitting nearest her were of higher rank and tried to talk only in French. Ten minutes on her right, ten minutes on her left: she must try to remember that this was only a dinner party, after all, and that she should talk to the men on both sides.

On her left was a heavy, sad-faced man, a colonel. When she turned to him she discovered that his French left much to be desired; they compromised on English, which he spoke almost without an accent. They talked for a few minutes about Paris,

the gardens, the museums, the boulevards; but she found it the hardest thing of all, because in his heavy, elderly face and pale, overset eyes she detected the intolerable emphasis of pity. She turned with relief to her general when the opportunity came. He, at least, with all his eighteenth-century pomposity, had the reserve which was the last minimal demand of good taste in an occasion so bizarre. He was everything she would have found funny in the old days: he was good form itself; he was protocol and genealogy and we-aristocrats-are-not-like-the-others; and yet she was grateful for it because it contained no pity and no sentiment. Behind his intense blue gaze there might have lurked innumerable adverse opinions of the world they lived in, the situation forced upon them, the grotesque novelties of 1940—but she would never know. He talked of music.

The food was exceptionally good. Through the dreamlike unreality of the scene Marie-Honorée was aware of a procession of dishes such as she had never even seen, much less tasted, since June. There was a really good soup and an exquisite sole with a sauce of mussels; there were *filets mignons* and three vegetables and a salad superbly mixed in the kitchen by French hands; there was a soufflé with orange in it, and at the end there were more fresh fruits than Marie-Honorée had believed to exist in Paris. She wondered a little sadly what all these polite, disciplined officers—behaving so "well," according to their lights and their orders—would say if she asked permission to take some fruit upstairs with her. They would load her down with it; they would send orderlies upstairs with baskets of it; they would behave very "well." Why not? They had won the war, and this food was conquered food.

There was rose-pink champagne at the beginning and end of the meal, and there was Romanée-Conti with the meat. Marie-Honorée recognized the red wine: it was her own, with a small gold tab and a number toward the base of the label. She could not be sure about the pink champagne, which might

have been hers or might have been requisitioned from any of the numerous stores in Paris. All this would be paid for someday, supposedly, by the French government, which was responsible for the support of the German army; but in the meanwhile Marie-Honorée thought of it in simpler and more concrete terms: *my table, my wine, my glasses.*

"Years ago," the general said, "there was a very remarkable French basso who used to sing in Germany and Austria. His name was Pol Plançon. I suppose he was before your time, madame?"

The meal came to an end; coffee was brought to the salon. Marie-Honorée sat for about ten minutes with her coffee cup. She had tasted no such coffee for a long time. Some of the younger officers who spoke French were allowed to come near and exchange a word or two with her. She finished the last drop of the coffee; it was very good, but she would have no more.

"No, thanks so much," she said. "It might keep me from sleeping, you know. . . . And I keep such early hours nowadays, I really— Most kind . . . You have all been very kind."

The officers lined up as if on parade, all down the long salon —her room, more distinctly her own room than any other in the house, except perhaps the one upstairs which was now the general's. She passed slowly along the line, giving each one her hand to kiss. They cracked their heels together very loudly and looked up afterward with enigmatic blue eyes. The general accompanied her down the room and out into the hall. At the foot of the stairs he bowed very low over her hand and clicked his heels too. For one moment afterward his eyes looked straight into hers with almost unbearable intensity. She sustained the look and turned to go.

"*Adieu,*" she said on some impulse, wondering if he would understand the finality of it. It was different in German, wasn't it? But no matter—"*Adieu.*" He stood there while she went up the grand staircase to the first landing, with her silver train

rustling gently behind her. He was standing very straight and stiff, and there was something in his posture which suggested the sense of a salute.

In her own room at the top of the house Marie-Honorée slowly undressed and put her beautiful clothes away. She would probably never wear them again. The room was small and ugly, with a single iron bed, a table and two chairs. She turned out the lights so that she could not see it. Then, in her dressing gown, with her hair loosened and the hairbrush in her hand, she sat on one of the straight-backed chairs by the window. But she did not brush her hair, and presently the brush fell to the floor unheeded. Outside the window the whole of Paris lay caught in moonlight, a thick, still moonlight that gave great ghostly shadows among the pointed roofs. The roofs and chimney pots of Paris filled the silent night down to the winding river.

Marie-Honorée could not weep now, but her heart was filled with sorrow for the living and the dead.

ELICK MOLL

To Those Who Wait

From darkness, from the darkness, coming. . . . From despair without meaning, and death that was without burial. From too much pity and too much dread. From hunger that was not alone our hunger, and brotherhood that was a two-edged sword between us, against our rest, against all hope of rest. . . .

In land that will be again our land. In days that will again be light for seeing—not for too much seeing; for knowing—not for too much knowledge. In darkness that will be rest and ending—not for hiding, oh my brother. In days that will be sun and warmth again. . . .

From the darkness, brother, from the darkness coming. But not forgetting, not forgetting.

I'VE GOT MY JOB BACK, JEFF Miller said to himself for the hundredth time. All morning he'd seen saying it, over and over, as if trying in that way to give form to the emotion that struggled for release within him. I've got my job back. It was a great, exultant shout bottled up inside him, yet he couldn't quite get the hold of it, to let it wing free. . . . It held apart, strangely muffled behind the fuzzy accumulations of the past four years—thoughts, remembrances that kept shuffling across his mind as if he still belonged to them, as if notice had not yet gone out, echoing, along the thousand tiny trails, that it was over, that this morning had put an emphatic period to all that time of trial and emptiness. All he could really get hold of, all he could really

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feel about the business, was that it was March, and having his job back in March meant oyster stew again in the Grand Central Oyster Bar.

Lord, it was funny, he thought. It must be that the human mind—at least his human mind—was not designed for the proper comprehension of either disaster or miracles. He remembered vividly that day in '33, just after the bank moratorium, when the ax had finally fallen at Gormely and Company. Like everybody else he'd been expecting it for weeks—months. He'd lain awake nights, thinking about it, cold with fear that went beyond just the idea of losing his job and what that entailed for himself and Martha. It was something in the air, that seemed to bespeak not merely the loss of a job but of all jobs, all sanity, hope, everything that mattered in the world— And when the day had come at last, and Mr. Gormely had assembled the staff to tell them the news, listening to the man shaping the unnecessary footnote to the disaster plainly written on his face, all that Jeff had been able to think about—of all the things that had kept him awake during the long nights waiting—was that now he wouldn't have to have the radiator in his car fixed, after all.

Nuts, that's what it was. Like going balmy without the relief of being able to jump and bang around and make the appropriate howling noises. And now he had his job back—and it was the same thing. Mr. Gormely had said, that day back in '33, "If ever a bond means something you can push across a counter again in this country, if ever Gormely and Company get back in the running, there'll be a place for every one of you boys who still wants it." He'd meant it too. He'd been as good as his word. And now—of all things Jeff had imagined, during the intervening years, he might feel and think and want to do if ever the miracle did happen—the only thing he could think of, that kept swinging back into his mind again and again like a slightly mad refrain, was eating oyster stew at the Grand Central Bar until he was blue in the face!

Benner and Harris and the rest of the old-timers who'd come back seemed to be having something of the same trouble too. All they could talk about all morning was going over to Maressi's for lunch to celebrate. Jeff had half made up his mind to go along with them; it would be fun eating with the gang at Maressi's again—if it was still open. He could hardly believe it would be, after all these years. But then he was always finding, with surprise, that lots of things had been going on just as if nothing had happened, the way they had back in '33. . . . When lunchtime came, however, he decided suddenly that he would rather be alone. He wanted to be with the fellows, talk to them, find out how they'd made out during the four years, but he felt a little strained with them, for some reason—maybe because he was afraid they might ask him what he'd been doing all this time. The idea that they might even suspect that he'd been on relief for over a year turned him cold. Besides, he wanted to call Martha, and tell her the news, and he wanted to eat oyster stew, and he wanted to get some things straightened out in his mind and try to get hold of this wonderful thing that had happened to him, that had been eluding him all morning behind the clutter and muddledness of the past four years.

He made a pretext of errands to do and went out by himself, and in the lobby of the building, downstairs, he caught up with it at last. Leaving the elevator, he was drawn into a little current of people hurrying toward the entrance, and something about the quality of that movement—less a press of bodies pushing him forward than some compulsion of mass movement that seemed to magnetize his own steps—reached down into a remembrance that had lain buried under the worry and dread and emptiness of these last years.

He stood at the entrance for a moment, controlling his impulse to run, to sing out, to grab someone and whirl him around and shout, "Hey, brother, what do you know, I've got my job back." . . . Then, suddenly, looking out at the noon-

day crowds along Fifth Avenue, gray-black formations moving like sluggish shadows against the glare of stone and pavement, the mood subsided, and a gust of panic went through him. It was strange how ominous they could look, moving along that way, en masse—those myriad harmless, destructible worlds, just like himself. . . .

As he turned down Fifth Avenue, he was conscious of the bills in his pocket. What a prince Mr. Gormely was. No gestures, no largesse, just "good to see you again, Jeff . . . seems like old times again, with you and Benner and Harris . . ." And then, digging into his pocket, casually: "Here, you'll probably need a few things."

And that was a capitalist—an enemy of the working classes—to listen to those guys in Union Square tell it—Jeff shook his head. Yes, there were some things it was going to take a while to get straightened out in his mind. But meanwhile, he remembered—with an adumbration of eagerness that again didn't quite belong to him now—meanwhile, he was going after that oyster stew in the Grand Central Bar. That, at least, was something it wouldn't take very long to get straightened out—no longer than it would take to get that first clump of hot, soft, rubbery, tasteless deliciousness into his mouth.

He stopped at the corner of Forty-sixth Street to wait for the light, and, absorbed in his thoughts, he was a little startled by the sound of a low intimate voice muttering something close beside him. He looked up and saw, with a curious dart of recognition, a man of about forty-five standing on the curb alongside; he was wearing a blue camel's hair coat, obviously of an expensive variety but quite frazzled now about the collar and cuffs; his head was hatless and covered with snarled graying hair, and his face was expressionless.

There was something strangely familiar about the man's aspect, and as he stared at him, trying to fathom that little pang of recognition, it seemed to Jeff, suddenly, unrealistically, and yet with a curious panicky conviction, that he had seen

this man before, many times before, on many corners, just like this, waiting for lights—the untidy graying head, the expressionless face, the toneless muttering voice. . . .

It was a curious, sick sensation—and it passed, like a beam of darkness drawing aside from his mind. He saw that this was just a man in a frayed blue coat whom he'd probably seen before, somewhere on the Avenue. The light changed, and as he started to cross the street, he saw the man's lips begin to move, heard him murmur in that low, gently chiding voice—as if he were remonstrating quietly with someone: "But, dear, you don't seem to understand, we can't manage it any more, we just can't manage. . . ."

Jeff hurried by, with his heart in his mouth, remembering oddly a phrase that he'd often heard used in the old days, had used himself. "Hey, will you cut it out? You'll have me talking to myself in a minute. . . ."

He shook his head, as if defiantly. Well, what of it? This was just another poor lug who'd cracked up and was talking to himself. So what? He'd seen plenty such, and plenty worse. And it wasn't his depression any more. Lord, if only he could get hold of that idea once and for all and hang on to it. Sure, it was a bad dream while it lasted—lines of guys with arms and legs and faces, just like him, standing in rain and cold . . . and Martha's face when he first talked about going on relief, and her face when the first relief money came in . . . and wakening in the morning with sweat on his face as if he'd been running all night instead of sleeping . . . and lots of things. . . . Yes, it was a plenty bad dream. But it was over now. It was over. He was going back to where he left off in '33 and start catching up with all the things he'd been missing out on all these years—baseball games and shows and new clothes and no debts and good rye whiskey and apple pie à la mode. . . . And the first thing he would catch up on would be about a gallon and a half of oyster stew right now.

He crossed over at Forty-third Street and walked toward

Vanderbilt Avenue springily, trying to recapture in the quality of his movement the physical elation, the surge of almost animal joy, that had risen in him so wonderfully a while back in the lobby. But as he approached the Grand Central his steps began to lag, and he knew finally that it was no use. It was spoiled. He didn't really want oyster stew any more. His stomach was still queasy with that sickish amalgam of pity and panic. He wouldn't be able to eat for hours now.

Angry at himself, and a little resentful of the world in general, he turned back on Vanderbilt Avenue. All this time, years now, he'd been telling himself that, if ever he got a job again, the first thing he'd do would be to go down to the Grand Central Oyster Bar and eat oyster stew until he was ready to bust. And now a guy in a frayed blue coat talking to himself had robbed him of that—just as if he'd reached over and snatched it out from under his nose. He'd always been a sucker for that kind of stuff. But—well, it wasn't so much that the guy was down at the heels and talking to himself—there were plenty of worse things he'd seen during the past few years that kept coming back to haunt him, wake him up at night with fear and shame sticking in his throat. But somehow, all at once, the poor lug had seemed to epitomize everything that had happened to people and to the world in the last few years. Sure, lots of people went around talking to themselves. He could remember his own Grandma Pearson sitting in a rocker, mumbling to herself. But this wasn't an old guy—or somebody who was nervous or preoccupied and had just forgotten himself for a minute. This was a young man, maybe forty-five—just a few years older than himself—and he was going around talking to himself because—well, because he was through, washed up, the depression had finished him. What did it matter to him that people were saying the depression was practically over? It wasn't over for him. It would never be over; the armistice wouldn't mean a damn thing to him, one way or the other. Something inside him had folded up.

It had been a time of trouble and loss for everybody—money and jobs and homes, and then self-respect and courage, and, worst of all, your grip on things, the ability to recognize any more what really counted, to feel badly about the things that should make you feel badly and happy about the things you were sure once would make you feel happy. . . . But, at least, to keep enough of yourself, that last shred, the ability to walk around with your fright and insecurity and loss hidden, deep inside yourself, behind your own inviolable wall of privacy. And to lose that! To walk around naked in the world, the whole story of what had happened to you exposed to public view. Talking to yourself out loud that way: "But, dear, you don't seem to understand, we can't manage it any more, we just can't. . . ."

Jeff Miller shivered a little. Yes, whatever had happened, that much at least had been spared him, that shred of privacy. No one had ever looked at him pityingly, gone off shaking his head, thinking, "Poor Jeff. The depression's got him." Yes, that, and standing in the lines—the men standing in the lines, rummaging in the garbage pails, stooping for cigarette butts—that much to be thankful for.

He hunched his shoulders and remembered suddenly that he hadn't yet called Martha. He'd been planning to do it after eating, with his throat still hot and steamy with the good peppery taste, from one of those booths upstairs in the Grand Central, where the operator got the number for you and you could sit with your legs crossed—or nearly—and say, "Well, Martha, I've got a little news for you. I've got my job back."

At the corner of Forty-sixth and Madison he stopped, thinking he might still call her from the drugstore. "I've been wanting to call you all morning, Martha, but I was too busy. Imagine, Martha, too busy. . . ." He vetoed the idea abruptly, crossed over and kept up Madison toward Fiftieth Street.

Lord, it was funny. Up there at Gormely's this morning, the same thing had happened to him. He'd been in the midst of his

talk with Mr. Gormely, trying to find the right words to tell him how glad he was and grateful and everything, what he was going to do, all the ideas he'd had. . . . And all at once, in the middle of everything, there'd flashed into his mind, for no reason at all, out of nowhere, the remembrance of that guy in the doorway on Lafayette Street that freezing day two years ago—or was it three?—the blue face and lumps in his jaws that showed how hard his teeth were clenched and the hands stiff in that awful gesture, like prayer. . . . Out of nowhere it came down between him and Mr. Gormely and what he was trying to say, and it seemed to muddle everything all at once, take all the kick out of it, and the sense and the reality—so that he could only stand there, not saying anything at all, not knowing what to say or think any more.

Yes, it was that, he realized—not the fact that he'd really been too busy—that had kept him all morning from calling Martha. He'd been afraid. Afraid. How often, during the past four years, in imagination he'd heard himself saying, "Martha, I've got my job back." And now it was true, and he was afraid. How often he'd heard himself saying it to her, feeling it open up between them like a great shining heaven, blotting out the years, the name on the relief rolls, the shame, the dread, all of it, having her think, all at once, as he said it, of coming back from Dotty's to their own place again, picking up the old furniture maybe or some new stuff, paying up old bills, having people in to dinner again, maybe cocktails. . . .

And now he was afraid, afraid that she would hear it in his voice—the man in the blue coat and the man with the blue face in the doorway, and all the rest of it—and she would know, too, that somehow it was too late, that it didn't matter any more that the depression was over, that somewhere, someplace they'd got to in the past four years, the depression would never, never be over.

Jeff Miller gave himself a shake as he turned into the Rockefeller Plaza. Lord, what a way to be going on at a time like this.

It was stupid, it was asinine. . . . "Come on, you lug, snap out of it," he said angrily to himself. "What the hell's the matter with you anyway?"

He got into the elevator. "Forty-eight," he said, after a momentary tiny struggle within. He realized, with a rueful, sore smile at himself, that he'd said it much louder than necessary. Funny, he thought, some day soon he would be saying it quite naturally, preoccupiedly, in fact—maybe not even saying it at all, because the operators would know him by then, would know he belonged on the forty-eighth floor.

The doors slid closed, the car began its ascent in a soundless, tearing gale of emptiness. There was only one other passenger, Jeff observed him from the tail of his eye; a young chap, hatless, needing a haircut, wearing the collar of his topcoat turned up around his neck. He was carrying a bag in one hand while in the other he held a dead cigarette from which he'd pinched the lighted end a moment before as he'd entered the car. Abstractedly Jeff watched him fiddling with the butt, rolling it between his fingers, the charred end flaking off infinitesimally to the floor. . . . Yes, he thought, lecturing himself with semicomic severity, there'd been enough of this nonsense. He'd call Martha right away from the extension in Phillips' office, no one would be using it now—poor Phillips, he remembered with a little jolt what Harris had told him this morning. He hadn't known about him committing—

The indicator began to flash. 28 . . . 29 . . . Jeff watched the chap with the bag move toward the door. . . . Yes, that's what he would do. Right away. From the phone in . . . one of the other offices. He could hear Martha's voice on the other end of the wire, instantly anxious, as if she couldn't imagine any more that he might be calling to tell her something she'd be glad to hear. "Jeff, what's the matter, is anything . . ."

32 . . . 33 . . . "Thirty-six," said the fellow with the bag. Jeff saw him bring his other hand, the one holding the piece of cigarette, toward his pocket, evidently intending to drop the

butt there, but somehow the gesture miscarried; the butt skidded off the flap of the pocket and fell to the floor. Involuntarily the chap made a grab to retrieve it, then straightened up as the doors split open. He stepped off and was abruptly foreshortened, swallowed. The car began to rocket up again, motionlessly.

"No, nothing's the matter, Martha," he would say. "But something has happened. . . ." He would allow himself that little luxury of suspense, Jeff thought, his eyes on the cigarette, which was rolling lazily toward the side of the car. Just a moment of suspense. He was entitled to that. Then, "I've got my job back, Martha," he would say.

The tightness in his chest began to relax again, and he felt a little warmth of hope, anticipation, go through him. Sure, it was going to take a little while to get these dizzy ideas out of his system. After all, four years was a long time. He mustn't forget that. He couldn't expect to wash it all out in a day—a morning. It would take a little time. In a week, two, it would all be gone from his mind—like a bad dream. As, he remembered with a quizzical smile, the women said about having a baby.

38 . . . 39 . . . 40 . . . "Jeff," she would cry, "it isn't true! You're . . ." His eyes were stary, with a little fixed smile of anticipation, as he watched the butt roll into a corner, teeter a moment uncertainly, then lie still. "Yes, honey, it's true. . . ." Barely a quarter of it had been smoked, he noted absently, no more than half-a-dozen puffs maybe. . . . "Yes, it's true, honey . . . you can come home now."

43 . . . 44 . . . Jeff moved to the side of the car. He wondered what Dotty would say. She'd been so swell about everything. There weren't many sisters-in-law who would take the kind of attitude she had all along. 46 . . . Jeff bent down. Just as soon as he was able to, he was going to show his appreciation to Dotty in some tangible—

He felt the car heaving motionlessly to a stop under him and

with a start, as if waking from a dream, he looked down at his hand, then in sudden panic jerked his head around to look at the operator. The other was regarding him curiously, with a kind of smile on his face. Jeff felt suddenly as if the bottom of his stomach had fallen out.

"Forty-eight," the operator said. Jeff raised himself slowly, feeling his face so clammy where a moment before it had been hot and prickly. He moved toward the door in an agony of humiliation, his fist clenched so tightly over the butt that he could feel it turning to mush in his grasp. . . . How could he convey to the man that he didn't do this sort of thing, that he didn't need it—that he had a job . . .

The humor of the situation struck him suddenly, and he saw himself, off to one side, doubled up with uncontrollable laughter. But when he himself tried to follow suit, the laughter stuck in his throat, turned him curiously ill, as if he'd failed in an obligation toward his own sanity. The doors opened. Desperately he pushed his mind across the abyss of emptiness that gaped before it, toward the realization that this was the forty-eighth floor, his floor, his office, where he worked, where he had his job back. . . .

For the moment it was dead in his mind, without meaning, without association. For the moment, as he stood at the door of the elevator, the same sickish, sinking sensation assailed him as he had got a while back on the Avenue; the unrealistic conviction again flashed in his mind that he was through, washed up, that this was some Germelshausen of the spirit into which he had stepped across time, where having a job meant nothing any more, because it was a land of dead men, ghosts in frayed blue coats mumbling to themselves, of the forever lost and hungry and hopeless. That somewhere he had got to in the last four years, where he had learned so many things, to do without oyster stew, without joy, without pride, to accept charity from the government, to wear secondhand

clothes, and even to pick up cigarette butts—from that place there was no returning.

He could feel the operator's gaze still on him, with curiosity —with amusement no doubt. He looked up now to face him, almost defiantly. But looking at the man, he was startled by the quality of expression on his face. He wasn't amused. He wasn't at all. He was . . . Curiously, the image of the man in the blue coat moved, almost like a refrain, across Jeff's mind. And with a sudden strange impulse he held out his hand, palm up.

"Funny, isn't it, the things you do?" He looked at the bit of mashed paper and tobacco crumbs, laughing a little, strangely. "And I just got my job back. Today. Just today—after four years."

"Guess you must be feeling pretty good, eh?"

"Pretty good," Jeff echoed. "Yes, pretty good." He kept looking at his open hand, laughing a little, softly. It wasn't ignominy, it wasn't shame and defeat. It wasn't that at all. . . .

The operator held the door with his foot. "Who with? The new firm? Gormely?"

Jeff nodded. No, it wasn't that at all. It was . . . He looked up now into the other's face, again with that strange new sense of recognition to which all this time he had been so curiously blind. This place, where the last four years had brought him— it wasn't a dead land; it was a place where he could never again be quite alone, never walk alone, or work alone—

He made a fist, punched lightly on the operator's shoulder. "Be seeing you," he said.

In the hall outside the office of Gormely and Company he stood for a moment staring at the fresh lettering on the frosted glass. "I've got my job back," he said wonderingly. It was still not joy. It was beyond joy.

WARREN BECK

Boundary Line

HEARING THE FAINT PLOP OF the evening *Journal* on the front step, Mr. Gifford set down his teacup, rose, said, "Excuse me, my dear," to Mrs. Gifford, and went to admit the world's day. In the light streaming outward from the open door he picked up the paper and rapidly unrolled it. His broad bony shoulders stooping and his gleaming white head inclined, he stood for a moment in the damp of the cloudy dusk to glance at the headlines.

Yes, there it was once more, the thing he braced himself against daily. Bad news again from England, more bombing of cities and more losses at sea. He stepped back in and closed the door quietly. Returning to the living room, he silently handed the paper to his wife. Mrs. Gifford's eyes skimmed over the large black letters; then she folded the paper and dropped it to the floor.

"Won't you have another cup of tea, William?" she said.

Without a word he picked up his cup, and brought it to the ministrations of her plump hands. He returned to his chair and set the filled cup down on the table untasted. Finally he spoke, seemingly to the floor.

"When are they going to get planes enough to stop those fellows?" he asked. "And how are they going to, if this country doesn't help more than we're doing?"

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Mrs. Gifford shook her head in companionable grief and bewilderment, her earrings glinting eloquently in the lamplight. She picked up her teacup again and took a long sip, and saw her husband follow her example. The news had struck her as painfully, but he had spoken first, so this time it was her turn to refrain and to change the subject.

"When you've finished your tea," she said, "I'll see that Veronica has put in the roast, and then how about a walk over through the park and around?"

Mr. Gifford nodded once over his raised cup, like a convalescent economical of speech and gesture. But when he went to lay out their coats, he knew he had got his balance again, and that now if his wife wanted to voice her melancholy, he in turn could be calm. Day by day they had fought the war in this fashion, and thus they would continue, he knew, as long as any habits held.

Neither of them was English; both their families had been in America for several generations. Though both were of predominantly English blood, each had some admixture—he a strain of French on his mother's side, and she a German grandfather, of whom lately they often remarked to each other that he had come here because he couldn't endure militaristic Germany. They had never been across the Atlantic, though they had sent their daughter to England and France on a summer tour with some of her college classmates. Neither had thought much about England in ordinary times, taking her and her empire for granted, like Shakespeare and the Episcopal Church and afternoon tea. Yet somehow they had always read the more serene of the modern English novels and had received their daughter's postcards that one summer with an undefined sense of hearing about people back home; and when Edward abdicated, they were disturbed by the vague threat of a veiled issue and gratified at its gentlemanly settlement, and when Chamberlain acknowledged he had been deceived, and England through him, the Giffords began to rearm in sentiment.

They were not alone. At the law office Mr. Gifford's younger partner agreed with him in principle; when Mr. Gifford called Hitler an upstart and an assassin, his partners replied that yes, he was a regular so-and-so for sure. The Giffords' friends who came to dinner discussed the war not only with unanimity of opinion, but of phrase, and thereby increased each other's confidence that somehow jolly old England would muddle through again, if for no other reason than that so many of the nicest people were so cordially inclined toward her cause.

Yet day after day came the disquieting news. And day after day there next door to the Giffords were the Schwartzes. This was the first indubitably German family the Giffords had ever known as neighbors. They had moved into the house five years ago, apparently on a wave of prosperity set up as two sons and a daughter successively finished high school and went to work for wages, the boys in a garage, the girl as a department-store clerk. Mr. Schwartz himself was a factory foreman, evidently well paid. Not only the three young Schwartzes but their parents too were American-born, yet to the Giffords they seemed as foreign as if they had just immigrated. They were the only people of their class and kind in that neighborhood, and since they were obviously without any instinct for social adaptation, others besides the Giffords wondered what cloudy ambition had brought them and what reward they expected of mere residence on a certain street. They were fiercely industrious, they gave no evidence of light-heartedness even among themselves, their fixed expressions were sullen and dissatisfied, and as Mrs. Gifford put it, they had no handles, nothing to pick them up by. All the Giffords' early attempts at neighborly amenities rolled off the Schwartzes as though their habitual surliness were a kind of waterproofing.

Only once did Mr. Schwartz make any overture, and that turned out to be a matter of business.

"Gifford," he had called over the hedge, in a tone half diffident, half imperative.

"Eh?" said Mr. Gifford, looking up while still kneeling at the edge of a flower bed. "Ah, good afternoon, Mr. Schwartz." He rose and walked toward the hedge. His neighbor's eye met his briefly and then dropped to the ground and roved back and forth over the vegetables while Mr. Schwartz spoke.

"I notice there's plenty of ground between these houses—must be ninety foot—and I was thinking about me buying a strip off your lot—say about twenty or thirty foot."

Mr. Gifford's mouth opened and he stared at Mr. Schwartz, while Mr. Schwartz's eye glanced up and down a row of beets.

"I'm afraid I couldn't consider that, Mr. Schwartz," he said at last.

"I'd pay you a fair price," said Mr. Schwartz, with the air of making a liberal concession.

"No, I really couldn't consider it," Mr. Gifford repeated. "I'd like to let you have what you want, but—really, I couldn't."

"I need some more room along here for my vegetables," said Mr. Schwartz, almost aggrievedly, "and you're not using the ground—"

"But I am using it—for lawn," said Mr. Gifford patiently. "If I sold you a strip, I'd have to bring my hedge closer to my house, and there wouldn't be enough lawn to make it look proper from the library windows."

"Do you have to have that hedge?" asked Mr. Schwartz, argumentatively, as though only an unreasonable foible of Mr. Gifford's were holding up the deal.

"I prefer to have it," Mr. Gifford said shortly. "I like it."

"But I need more room for my vegetables," Mr. Schwartz insisted, as if offering an entirely new and overwhelming reason.

"Sorry, Mr. Schwartz," said Mr. Gifford firmly, half turning away. "It's out of the question."

Mr. Schwartz leveled a scowling glance at him for a moment.

"I might have known that's the way you'd act about it," he said bitterly.

"Oh, come now," protested Mr. Gifford. "You can scarcely blame a man for not selling if he doesn't want to. Put yourself in my place—would you sell me some of your land?"

But Mr. Schwartz had already turned away and did not answer. Thereafter he never greeted Mr. or Mrs. Gifford, and soon his clan was following his example. The two families settled down to the strained silence of an undefined truce. It was broken only by a tiff over damage repeatedly done the Giffords' flowers by the Schwartz boys' recklessly thrown soft-ball in practice in which the burly brothers seemed at enmity and trying to knock each other over.

"Why couldn't you boys play somewhere else?" Mr. Gifford had finally suggested, as the younger fished out the ball from among the shattered delphiniums while the other looked on grimly over the hedge.

"We're practicing on our own lot," the elder boy had growled.

"But you're not keeping the ball there," Mr. Gifford retorted. "You're always throwing it into our flower beds."

"Oh, what of it?" the younger Schwartz joined in, and then pushed back through the hedge before adding, "What's a few flowers?"

"If the flowers aren't yours, you've nothing to say about them," Mr. Gifford had answered sharply. "I've made a reasonable appeal to you, but if you feel this way about it, I'll have to forbid you to come on my property. There are laws against trespass and damage, you know."

The Schwartz boys had supported their retreat with defiant guffaws, from the midst of which Mr. Gifford heard one flat derisive voice.

"Trespass, you know. He's a lawyer, you know. He must have went to college."

The ball-playing was moved to the sidewalk and continued

there, in spite of some protests from passers-by. And thereafter the boundary line between the two properties had the invisible potency and threat of an electrically charged wire. In the beginning it had always been the Schwartz eye which turned away first, fixed and hard, always the Schwartz back that bent first away from neighbors toward its task. Now the rite of a taboo was established; the Giffords as well as the Schwartzes gardened uncommunicatively, with cautious circumspection and bowed averted heads.

"William, I can't stand it," Mrs. Gifford exclaimed one day, returning to the house, her firm full cheeks an even deeper pink than usual. "It's like being made to practice some awful superstition. There we were, Mrs. Schwartz and I, not twenty feet from each other, with only that low hedge between us, and I cutting flowers and she weeding her vegetables, and neither of us saying a word to each other."

Mr. Gifford took off his spectacles and smiled across the room at his wife.

"But, my dear," he protested indulgently, "how can it be otherwise? We and the Schwartzes actually haven't a word to say to each other. We've found that out."

Mrs. Gifford shook her head so vigorously that her garden hat flapped against her ears.

"But we've never lived this way with neighbors before," she said.

"No," he agreed, "but we've never had neighbors like these before. They're really different, my dear. We've done what we could to—to appease the Schwartzes, and it didn't work. We can't humiliate ourselves. Perhaps with things as they are we'd better let that hedge grow high."

Mrs. Gifford sighed. "Perhaps," she agreed.

In another year the hedge had grown enough so that the Giffords could straighten up from their gardening without having to remember to keep eyes averted. The Schwartzes were frequently in their yard, mowing and clipping with a kind

of furious hurry, chopping away the sod from the borders of their walks in a deep gash, jerking out any day-old weed that an abashed Nature sent up in their regimented vegetable rows. All this fanatical activity began to seem like a dramatized reproof to the Giffords' garden, with its winding flagstone paths grass-grown and crowded upon by supple unchecked flowers.

"I'm sure they don't approve of our garden, William," Mrs. Gifford had said at last. "They probably think it's slovenly. Or perhaps they think we don't know any better."

Mr. Gifford took out his pipe and held it ready for the slight firm gestures he often made when he spoke his inner convictions.

"My dear, it's much more than that, I feel. They have their way of gardening, and hence to them it is *the* way, and our variance from their standard must be disquieting, even irritating. They must see that we want it this way and that we're pleased with it, and perhaps they wonder secretly what it is that we get out of it, but such speculation would be too close to open-mindedness for them to indulge in without threat to their laborious pride. Instead they fall back upon the primitive way of hating us because we are different. That insulating hatred is one of the things that keep them as they are."

"William," said Mrs. Gifford pensively, "do you suppose that perhaps in our way we're as narrow as they are?"

"Oh, I dare say we are," he agreed. "We're fairly set, and not much given to learning new tricks any more, are we, my dear? But there's this difference. We're addicted to our ways because they please us, and not just for their sake as habits. I mean, we value the end-product and not the means. It's a hard distinction to make, but I know it's there, it's real and quite important, and here's one plain evidence. Take people who live for happiness, and who achieve enough of it to know what it really is, and they may be quite conventional and given to routines, but only for themselves and for the sake of what they

get out of living as they do; and they're willing to let anyone else have his different habits, make his different approach to happiness. Whereas the fellow who in spite of all his diligence in routines is not really happy and attains no genuine personal satisfactions—he's quite likely to be irritated by other ways of life which call his own further into question. So he rationalizes his jealousy of others who are happier by hating them for their variance from his rule of life, upon which he will crucify himself rather than admit he has made a less discriminating choice of habit patterns."

"William, I believe you're right," said Mrs. Gifford, feeling for the thousandth time an admiration of her husband's talent for judicious summing-up.

In the faith he had pronounced Mr. Gifford and his wife tried to live serenely despite the nearness of the Schwartzes and the diplomatic necessity of not recognizing them. "That is just their way," they thought, when on five-o'clock walks after tea they saw through unshaded windows the Schwartzes already hulking around their kitchen table for supper, the men in vests reaching abruptly among the bowls of food or bending low and feeding with both hands, the mother and daughter in aprons, and often one or the other coming from the stove with pan or kettle to replenish the bowls. "That is just their way," the Giffords tried to tell themselves as the Schwartzes at work outside yelled at each other in a tone the Giffords had never before heard used between humans.

And the Giffords' own failure to live on neighborly terms with the Schwartzes seemed less significant to them, but inevitable, as they noticed that the Schwartzes became neighborly with no one else either, and had but few callers, all of them people whose speech like the Schwartzes' was loud, laconic, and ungrammatical, whose bearing was like the Schwartzes', rough, assertive, and self-conscious. Gradually therefore the Giffords resigned themselves to the accident which had set down next door to them such inflexibly foreign

persons, and learned to shut their minds to the Schwartzes, as they would have shut out and forgotten inclement weather.

But then when Germany marched again and Poland was devastated, the Schwartzes could not be ignored and forgotten; they somehow crowded back toward the edge of the Giffords' consciousness and remained there, an itch, an irritant, almost a thorn. After a few weeks' discreet observation Mrs. Gifford told her husband that she could see a change in the Schwartzes. They looked even grimmer and more surly than usual, she thought, and they turned their heads aside even more quickly to avoid the necessity of recognizing neighbors who passed; yet at the same time they were louder than ever with their relatives, and extraordinarily talkative for such phlegmatic inarticulate people. Mr. Gifford himself then took the Schwartzes under observation, and his conclusion was that, as might be expected, they were reacting to world news by remembering they were Germans, so that they felt themselves a stubborn garrison on a foreign front, which after all was more or less the way they had always behaved, war or no war. Mrs. Gifford mused on this a moment with one of her infrequent frowns, and then said,

"The Schwartzes are the kind of people out of whom Nazis could be made, aren't they?"

"My dear, they *are* Nazis," Mr. Gifford declared. "They show how Nazis come to be. Anybody is a Nazi—potential at all times, active when he gets a chance to be—who lacks the satisfactions of intelligent self-possession, and a resultant serenity and cordiality. Such fellows have to get themselves regimented to compensate for their confusion, and for their sense of inferiority insofar as they become conscious of others who are livelier and more urbane. We've had an outbreak of this morbid Germanism on the average of once a generation for the last four generations, my dear, and as I see it, the causes are not so much economic or political as psychological—psychopathic, in fact. The modern Germans—at least the ones

who start the wars—can't stand the strain on *amour propre* of being outdistanced in the art of living by other nationalities. Their egoism and aloofness and solemn asininity are over-compensations. They've got over being intellectually hospitable, as when Frederick imported Voltaire; they've given up aping Gallic vivacity like the German in my French grammar who woke up the guests at the hotel by jumping over chairs, and said, 'Je approng d'etre vifre, gomme le Francais.' But since they can't be lively like the French, or poised like the English, they've determined to make the best—or the worst—of what they are, and to repudiate what they can't or won't become, and their method, the Nazi method, is a pathological symptom of maladjustment—they try to creep back into the womb of the race and the state."

Mrs. Gifford looked at her husband in amazement and admiration.

"William," she said, "that makes more sense to me than all the books I've read about this crisis. In the end those writers bring you up against something implacable and inexplicable in the German character, and I think you've explained it."

"Thank you, my dear," said Mr. Gifford. "I'm no expert, though. Perhaps I'm wrong. Perhaps I'm hipped. Perhaps it's all in my eye."

"I don't think so, William," she said.

Taking up this premise did not make the Giffords any more comfortable in mind. In fact, it only made them alert for further evidence of the unamenably foreign in the Schwartzes. Soon the Giffords agreed again that they had such evidence. Was it nothing but coincidence, they asked each other, that following close after Hitler's move into Norway and Holland with the notorious assistance of fifth columns, there should have been a marked increase in comings and goings at the Schwartz house? Not only were the callers all obviously Germans like the Schwartzes, but among them were some new persons, especially one fellow with a large paunch and thick

glasses, who greeted the Schwartzes very briskly and who was received and invited in with a deference all the more significant in that the Schwartzes had often let visitors stand on the front porch to talk to them. And now when relatives passing in their cars stopped and honked, and Mr. and Mrs. Schwartz lumbered out, they would stand with first one foot and then another on the running-board, bending their heads inward toward the car's occupants, and talking on and on in lowered voices.

"One thing I'm sure of, William," remarked Mrs. Gifford. "They're not just planning a family picnic."

"But perhaps they are, my dear," Mr. Gifford answered wryly. "What is this whole fracas in Europe but a family picnic all over other people's estates?"

"William," she said, "I'm beginning to feel that maybe people of our kind are rather alone in the world. Think of all the irrational, brutally assertive folk everywhere. Maybe a tide is rising, maybe this gloom we live in now, this year, is the beginning of a long night."

"My dear, we mustn't lose our nerve," Mr. Gifford said soberly. "Evolution isn't going to drop people like the English and pick up Hitler and his gang unless we abet by fear. We must hold on."

Thereafter the Giffords did not risk disquieting each other by talking in a hopeless vein. Each one pondered the grave threat privately. And Mr. Gifford secretly began a measure of his own. He supposed he was undetected in it until one evening as he sat at his desk Mrs. Gifford came and laid down a list of numbers before him.

"Eh, my dear?" he said. "What's this?"

"The licenses of the cars that stopped there today while you were at the office."

She paused, and her husband looked up at her questioningly.

"I know you've been listing them, William," she said. "I thought I might as well attend to it for you while you weren't here."

Mr. Gifford picked up the paper and stared at it.

"Thank you, my dear," he said at last. "I—I didn't want to alarm you about it, though. Perhaps all this is unnecessary, maybe even foolish, but . . ."

"No, William," she said. "We must keep our eyes and ears open. All the time. You should have let me help you, William."

He took her hand and pressed it.

"My dear!" he said.

She held his hand a moment and then went on.

"There are three cars at the Schwartzes now. They've been there nearly half an hour."

Mr. Gifford put the paper into a pigeonhole. Then suddenly he pushed back his chair and stood. He strode to the window and peered between the curtains. Then looking back at his wife, he cleared his throat.

"My dear, I've been wondering for some time whether I shouldn't— Whatever I can find out might be useful, some day. At least I should do what I can. Perhaps this is the time . . ."

"William, I think you should," she replied.

He marched out of the room and into the front hallway, she following. He got into his overcoat. She reached up to the closet shelf.

"Here's your darker hat, William. And turn up your overcoat collar to cover your shirt."

"I'll go out the back way," he said.

She nodded and followed him closely again. She opened the back door for him.

"Be careful, William," she whispered as he went out; then she closed the door behind him, went back into the living room, and picked up her knitting.

Mr. Gifford crossed the boundary line, through a slight gap in the hedge. He circled the Schwartz house carefully. As he had thought, they were all crowded into the big kitchen. He stepped close to the window and peered in under the shade. Five men including Mr. Schwartz were seated around the

table, playing cards. Each man had a glass and a bottle of beer before him,and at opposite corners of the table were plates of thick sandwiches. Mr. Gifford looked closer. Yes, cheese sandwiches. Near the stove sat Mrs. Schwartz and three other women, in rocking chairs, swinging steadily, speaking briefly and soberly back and forth. Two of the women had glasses of beer; Mrs. Schwartz and one other held large heavy cups and saucers. Mr. Gifford glanced at the stove; there sat a big coffeepot.

One of the men banged a final card upon the table with a show of force as though driving a stake. There was a guttural rumble of remarks around the table as the dealer gathered the cards for a new hand. Mr. Gifford looked behind him quickly and then laid his ear against the window. The man who had slammed down the card was recounting with complete detail what cards he had held and when he had played each and with what result, as of a game the others had not seen, much less participated in. Mr. Gifford turned his head and looked into the room again. The other men were listening to the insistent narrator with fixed glances almost hostile. The dealer began to flip the cards around, the talker paused, each player bent his head and examined his cards as they came, clutching them up to his chest. Mrs. Schwartz was in sustained monologue now; Mr. Gifford put his ear to the window again and heard something about how she had done her pickles that fall.

He sighed and stepped back from the window. He found the path and went quickly to the sidewalk. There he took out card and pencil and copied the cars' license numbers. Then he straightened his shoulders and turned back his overcoat collar. He marched over to his own walk, up to his own house, and went in.

"Well, William!" said Mrs. Gifford, as he appeared in the living room, hat in hand.

"My dear, I think perhaps I let myself be carried away a

bit," he said. "The men were playing cards and drinking beer, cheese sandwiches and coffee were served, and Mrs. Schwartz was holding forth about pickle-making. The short and simple annals of the poor Schwartzes, my dear."

"The poor Schwartzes," said Mrs. Gifford reflectively. "Well, it's worth knowing, isn't it. It's some relief. If only we could be sure."

"I'm afraid we can't be sure, my dear," he said, as he wriggled out of his overcoat. "I don't intend to be too sure. We'll go on keeping those license numbers. We'll keep our eyes and ears open."

"I think that's right, William," she agreed. "And thank goodness we didn't sell them that strip of land."

"We'll hold on to that, my dear," Mr. Gifford declared. "We'll never let them get any closer."

LEANE ZUGSMITH

Room in the World

When she heard Ab's footsteps approaching the door, she knew, without having to see or to hear him, that it had been the same as yesterday and all the days before, since he had been fired from the job he had held as watchman for the office building. He couldn't do anything but talk about it all night long, and every day he went back trying to get to some one higher up who would tell the new superintendent "Ab's been with us nine years, there ain't no reason to let him go." If she was him, Pauline thought, she'd give it up and if, like he said, there wasn't no job for him no place, she'd go on Relief. With a five-months-old baby and a three-year-old boy growing so fast that the Lord only knew how she was going to make this suit of his any bigger, and a girl of eight, already in the second grade, she'd give it up. But Ab was bull-headed, always had been, and maybe he'd get back, like he said.

As Ab came in, she hastened to close the door leading off the kitchen into the room where Jappy was taking his nap. Even when Ab raised his voice, it wouldn't wake the baby in the market basket near the stove. She was a dandy sleeper, better than Jappy, much better than Frances ever had been.

She thrust the needle into the material, waiting to see if Ab was going to speak first. If he kept on staring at her, it was up

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to her and it meant he was good and sore. After a while, she knew it was up to her.

"Either the clock's fast," she said in the casual, conversational tone she had lately learned to use, "or Frances must have been kept in."

Gloomily he stared at her.

"She done her homework, I know." Pauline turned Jappy's drawers inside out and studied the problem of enlarging them.

"I tried every God-damned one of them," he said between his teeth. "I seen all their chippy secretaries. They're all too God-damned busy to see me. I'm only working there *nine* years. Maybe that ain't long enough."

"No one can say you ain't tried," she said.

"Tried? I done everything but crawl along the corridors on my belly. It's 'see the super. It's up to the super.' Nuts!"

"Them real-estate people are over the super," she said sympathetically and she thought: he won't give it up yet. No use telling him about the gas or how they wouldn't give her credit at the other grocery store she tried out.

"They won't even see me. You seen what they written me."

"It was a sin the old super had to die," she said.

"The new one will take me back," he said ominously. "I ain't saying how but I'm gonta get back on the job."

Hooding her anxious eyes as she watched him to read what was in his mind, she heard Frances at the door. She hurried to open it, her mind still on her husband's words. The kid was all excited about something, the way she got sometimes, dancing around the room. She sure was high-strung; good thing the baby didn't seem to take after her. Pauline was afraid she'd begin to bother her pa, but he didn't seem to take notice, banging his hand down on the kitchen table, crying out:

"I ain't going back crawling to them, neither, to get it!"

She cast a swift look at the baby to see if she had been disturbed by the noise. "Maybe—" Pauline began.

"Maybe, nothing! I'll be back on the job, wait and see."

Frances kept tugging at her arm. "*Ma,* I been telling you."

Ab glared at his daughter.

"We're talking now, Pa and me," Pauline said quickly.

"Only, Ma, let me tell about the new little girl, she come today. She's got curls just like Shirley Temple." Frances's voice went up high.

"Shut up!" said Ab.

"The new little girl, she looks just like Shirley Temple."

"Play in the other room." Her mother pinched her cheek. "Jappy's asleep in yours and his."

"No, I don't wanta. I wanta tell you about the new little girl, Ma, she's got red paint on her fingernails. Can't I have—"

Her mother interrupted her. "You're getting your Pa worked up, not minding." She reached for a tin pail. "Go on down and get me five cents' worth of milk, hear me. Tell him your Ma said she'd stop in and pay up tomorrow."

Ab breathed heavily after the little girl had left the room. Without looking up from her sewing, his wife said calmly: "She's only eight." And she thought: in a while, when we can't get no credit no place, there won't be that much spirit in any of them.

"I'm trying to think out what to do, and she comes in babbling till she gets me all mixed up."

"Try to think what you was thinking before."

"What do you think I'm trying to do?"

The tick of the clock sounded loud now. The baby's occasional soft snores could be heard. Pauline kept her head bent over her sewing until Ab spoke up.

"You know how they do when a lot of them go out on strike," he said.

"Well?"

"Like I read once in a newspaper, see, a fellow and his whole family, they go out with signs, asking for his job back."

Her face became thoughtful. "Like them pickets is what you mean?"

"You got me."

She ceased to sew. "I couldn't leave Frances take care of the baby."

"No. She'd let it smother or something." He looked down at his hands for a while. Presently he said: "I could take the two kids, see, all of us wearing signs asking for my job back."

"I could make the signs O. K., if we had some kind of stiff paper," she said. "You wouldn't walk Jappy too long, would you, Ab? He don't stand much walking."

Ab stood up, his face lighted. "That would get them, all right, you bet! Maybe them newspaper guys will come around and take our pictures." He pulled a pencil from his vest pocket and smoothed the wrinkles from a brown paper bag.

"Maybe down at the corner, they'd give you some stiff paper," said Pauline.

He wet the pencil, leaning over the kitchen table, too elated to sit down. "Now, we'll say—" He wet the pencil once more. "What'll we say?"

"If the sign's for the kids it had oughta say something about 'my Pa' and so on."

"You got brains, Pauline," he said. " 'Please get my Pa back his job.' How's that?"

"O. K."

"We'll make Jappy's and Frances's alike. Now mine." He wet the pencil. "What would you say?"

" 'Get me back my job at the Stark Building,' how about that?"

"No," he said. He started to print letters. "How's this? 'Fired for no reason after nine years being watchman at the Stark Building.' "

"That's O.K.," she said.

"O. K.? It's the nuts!" he cried out gleefully. "Wait till I see the faces of them birds who think they ain't gonta take me back!"

It was getting past the baby's feeding time; Pauline thanked her stars that she was so good she wouldn't start bawling right off. She couldn't pick her up with Jappy goose-stepping around, already dressed to go out, the sign flapping as he thrust each leg straight out before him, Frances trying to see how the sign looked on her before the little mirror over the dresser, and Ab yelling: "Let's go to town. Come on, you kids."

Jappy couldn't be held down. He kept singing: "I'm a picket, I'm a picket, I'm a picket," until they couldn't help laughing.

"Them signs are going to blow all around on them," Pauline said.

"Don't worry about them signs," Ab cried out. "Come on, you kids."

"I'm a picket," shouted Jappy. In a fit of wildness, he dug his forefinger into the top of his cap and began whirling around.

"You'll get dizzy. Stop it!" his mother called out.

Frances ran in. "I can't see what I look like, Ma," she complained.

Jappy started going round too fast and fell down.

"You bent the sign," his father said crossly, picking him up.

Jappy smiled when he saw that he didn't have to cry.

"It'll only take a minute." Pauline threaded a needle and began to sew the bottom corners of the sign on to Jappy's little coat. I'll sew on yours, too," she told Frances.

"Lift me up, Pa, in by the looking-glass, so's I can see," Frances begged.

As Ab took her into the other room, Pauline said to her son with exasperation: "Keep still, will you!"

"I'm gonta be a picket," he screamed joyfully. "I'm gonta go up to them dopes—"

"Where did you learn that?" She bit off the thread.

"I'm gonta be a dope, I'm gonta be a picket."

Frances came back, saying sulkily: "I can't read what it says in the looking-glass."

"You know what it says. I told her." Ab followed her.

"What's mine say?" cried Jappy.

"It says 'Give my Pa back his job,' " said Frances, holding still while her mother sewed the bottom corners of her sign on to her jacket.

"Give my Pa back his job," Jappy chanted, starting once more to goose-step.

Ab grabbed his hand. "Come on. I ain't gonta wait another minute."

Picking up the baby, Pauline followed them to the door. As soon as she had closed it, she heard sounds of bawling outside. It was Jappy, all right. She opened the door. Ab called angrily to her from the stairs. "He wantsta take his Popeye doll along with him. He ain't gonta."

Jappy's cries were louder now that he knew his mother was listening. "Let him," she said. "It won't do no harm," Might do good, she thought, them seeing a little kid with a doll. "I'll get it."

"Make it snappy," Ab called back.

She found the wooden figure from which all the paint had streaked. Jappy was back at the door with Frances just behind. The little boy smirked. "Popeye the Sailor's gonta be a picket," he said.

"Hurry up!" Ab called out.

"Popeye wants a sign." Jappy held the doll up to his mother. "Make him a sign." His chin was beginning to tremble.

She snatched a fragment of paper from the table, scribbled on it and attached it precariously to the doll. "Hurry." She gave both children little pushes and then stood with her ear to the crack of the door where she could hear them talking as they went toward the stairs.

"Popeye's sign says 'Give my Pa back his job,' " said Jappy.

"It don't say nothing," said Frances. "It's only scribble."

"It do, too," he said.

Then their voices became fainter. She wished she could see the street from their windows to watch them walking away. Hope Ab don't forget he shouldn't keep them out too long. The baby began to whimper, and she patted its back as she unbuttoned her blouse. It don't do no good for me to skimp on eating, she thought, or I'll only take it away from the baby.

When they came back, Ab couldn't talk of anything but the expression on the new super's face and how people had stopped them and they almost had their pictures taken. As Pauline ripped the stitches off Jappy's sign, she noticed that he was almost asleep on his feet. When she started to rip the stitches off Frances's sign, she saw that her skinny legs were trembling. She looked up into the little girl's miserable face. "Why, what's the matter, honey?"

Before Frances could get out a word, she began to bawl. She bawled just like she did when she was a baby.

"What happened to her?" Pauline turned to Ab.

"I don't know." He was beginning to be gloomy again.

Pauline put her arms around Frances. "Tell Ma," she said.

Her breath catching, the tears streaming down the monkey face she was making, Frances said: "The new little girl seen me."

"A lot of people seen you," said Pauline. "That don't make no difference." She was trying to keep her voice steady.

Frances struggled out of her mother's reach. "The new little girl seen me," she got out between sobs and ran from the room.

"I try to get back my job," said Ab heavily, "and that's the thanks I get."

Before she spoke, she looked around for Jappy and, finding him asleep on the floor, she said, trying to pick her words:

"She got a crush on some little girl at school she says looks like Shirley Temple."

"That ain't gonta get my job back." Ab bent his head over the table where his sign and Jappy's lay.

Both of them could hear, through the closed door, Frances's frenzy of weeping.

Pauline swallowed. "Other people seeing her don't make no difference, on account of she's at the age, see what I mean?"

"No," he said, but his lowered voice had in it a curious strain.

"She's highstrung, Ab. To some other kid it mightn't mean nothing, only with her it might set her back, you know how kids are."

She waited for him to reply, watching him make marks on the back of his sign with his pencil. It was the truth, he might as well admit it. Other people didn't have to take out their kids with signs on them begging for their Pa's job. The weeping in the next room had subsided into long sighs and occasional hiccoughs.

Presently, without looking up, he said: "I shouldn't oughta take her tomorrow."

"Jappy likes it," Pauline said hopefully.

He made more marks on the back of the sign. Still without looking up, he said: "We could change the words tomorrow." He pushed the lettering toward her, keeping his eyes averted.

The crooked printing said: "Ain't there room in the world for us?" Now it's gonta bust out, she thought. Only you can't let it go, not with the kid bawling in the other room and him so down in the mouth. She swallowed the thing in her throat. And, searching for it, she found the tone she had lately learned to use.

"It don't seem like 'ain't' is the right word there," she said in a casual, conversational voice.

KATHARINE BRUSH

Night Club

PROMPTLY AT QUARTER OF TEN P. M. Mrs. Brady descended the steps of the Elevated. She purchased from the newsdealer in the cubbyhole beneath them a next month's magazine and a to-morrow morning's paper and, with these tucked under one plump arm, she walked. She walked two blocks north on Sixth Avenue; turned and went west. But not far west. Westward half a block only, to the place where the gay green awning marked Club Français paints a stripe of shade across the glimmering sidewalk. Under this awning Mrs. Brady halted briefly, to remark to the six-foot doorman that it looked like rain and to await his performance of his professional duty. When the small green door yawned open she sighed deeply and plodded in.

The foyer was a blackness, an airless velvet blackness like the inside of a jeweler's box. Four drum-shaped lamps of golden silk suspended from the ceiling gave it light (a very little) and formed the jewels: gold signets, those, or cuff-links for a giant. At the far end of the foyer there were black stairs, faintly dusty, rippling upward toward an amber radiance. Mrs. Brady approached and ponderously mounted the stairs, clinging with one fist to the mangy velvet rope that railed their edge.

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From the top, Miss Lena Levin observed the ascent. Miss Levin was the checkroom girl. She had dark-at-the-roots blonde hair and slender hips upon which, in moments of leisure she wore her hands, like buckles of ivory loosely attached. This was a moment of leisure. Miss Levin waited behind her counter. Row upon row of hooks, empty as yet, and seeming to beckon—wee curved fingers of iron—waited behind her.

"Late," said Miss Levin, "again."

"Go wan!" said Mrs. Brady. "It's only ten to ten. *Whew!* Them *stairs!*"

She leaned heavily, sideways, against Miss Levin's counter and, applying one palm to the region of her heart, appeared at once to listen and to count. "Feel!" she cried then in a pleased voice.

Miss Levin obediently felt.

"Them stairs," continued Mrs. Brady darkly, "with my bad heart, will be the death of me. Whew! Well, dearie! What's the news?"

"You got a paper," Miss Levin languidly reminded her.

"Yeah!" agreed Mrs. Brady with sudden vehemence. "I got a paper!" She slapped it upon the counter. "An' a lot of time I'll get to *read* my paper, won't I now? On a Saturday night!" She moaned. "Other nights is bad enough, dear knows—but *Saturday* nights! How I dread 'em! Every Saturday night I say to my daughter, I say, 'Geraldine, I can't,' I say, 'I can't go through it again, an' that's all there is to it,' I say. 'I'll *quit*,' I say. An' I *will*, too!" added Mrs. Brady firmly, if indefinitely.

Miss Levin, in defense of Saturday nights, mumbled some vague something about tips.

"Tips!" Mrs. Brady hissed it. She almost spat it. Plainly money was nothing, nothing at all, to this lady. "I just wish," said Mrs. Brady and glared at Miss Levin, "I just wish *you* had had to spend one Saturday night, just one, in that dressing room! Bein' pushed an' stepped on and near knocked down by

that gang of hussies, an' them orderin' an' bossin' you 'round like you was *black,* an' usin' your things an' then sayin' they're sorry, they got no change, they'll be back. Yah! They *never* come back!"

"There's Mr. Costello," whispered Miss Levin through lips that, like a ventriloquist's, scarcely stirred.

"An' as I was sayin'," Mrs. Brady said at once brightly, "I got to leave you. Ten to ten, time I was on the job."

She smirked at Miss Levin, nodded, and right-about-faced. There, indeed, Mr. Costello was. Mr. Billy Costello, manager, proprietor, monarch of all he surveyed. From the doorway of the big room, where the little tables herded in a ring around the waxen floor, he surveyed Mrs. Brady, and in such a way that Mrs. Brady, momentarily forgetting her bad heart, walked fast, scurried faster, almost ran.

The door of her domain was set politely in an alcove, beyond silken curtains looped up at the sides. Mrs. Brady reached it breathless, shouldered it open, and groped for the electric switch. Lights sprang up, a bright white blaze, intolerable for an instant to the eyes, like sun on snow. Blinking, Mrs. Brady shut the door.

The room was a spotless, white-tiled place, half beauty shop, half dressing room. Along one wall stood washstands, sturdy triplets in a row, with pale-green liquid soap in glass balloons afloat above them. Against the opposite wall there was a couch. A third wall backed an elongated glass-topped dressing table; and over the dressing table and over the washstands long rectangular sheets of mirror reflected lights, doors, glossy tiles, lights multiplied. . . .

Mrs. Brady moved across this glitter like a thick dark cloud in a hurry. At the dressing table she came to a halt, and upon it she laid her newspaper, her magazine, and her purse—a black purse worn gray with much clutching. She divested herself of a rusty black coat and a hat of the mushroom persuasion, and hung both up in a corner cupboard which she

opened by means of one of a quite preposterous bunch of keys. From a nook in the cupboard she took down a lace-edged handkerchief with long streamers. She untied the streamers and tied them again round her chunky black alpaca waist. The handkerchief became an apron's baby cousin.

Mrs. Brady relocked the cupboard door, fumbled her key-ring over, and unlocked a capacious drawer of the dressing table. She spread a fresh towel on the plate-glass top, in the geometrical center, and upon the towel she arranged with care a procession of things fished from the drawer. Things for the hair. Things for the complexion. Things for the eyes, the lashes, the brows, the lips, and the finger nails. Things in boxes, and things in jars and things in tubes and tins. Also an ash tray, matches, pins, a tiny sewing kit, a pair of scissors. Last of all, a hand-printed sign, a nudging sort of sign:

NOTICE!

These articles, placed here for your convenience, are the property of the *maid.*

And directly beneath the sign, propping it up against the looking-glass, a china saucer, in which Mrs. Brady now slyly laid decoy money: two quarters and two dimes, in four-leaf-clover formation.

Another drawer of the dressing table yielded a bottle of bromo seltzer, a bottle of aromatic spirits of ammonia, a tin of sodium bicarbonate, and a teaspoon. These were lined up on the shelf above the couch.

Mrs. Brady was now ready for anything. And (from the grim, thin pucker of her mouth) expecting it.

Music came to her ears. Rather, the beat of music, muffled, rhythmic, remote. *Umpa-um, umpa-um-mm*—Mr. "Fiddle" Baer and his band, hard at work on the first fox-trot of the night. It was teasing, foot-tapping music; but the large solemn feet of Mrs. Brady were still. She sat on the couch and opened her newspaper; and for some moments she read uninterrupt-

edly, with special attention to the murders, the divorces, the breaches of promise, the funnies.

Then the door swung inward, admitting a blast of Mr. "Fiddle" Baer's best, a whiff of perfume, and a girl.

Mrs. Brady put her paper away.

The girl was *petite* and darkly beautiful; wrapped in fur and mounted on tall jeweled heels. She entered humming the ragtime song the orchestra was playing, and while she stood near the dressing table, stripping off her gloves she continued to hum it softly to herself:

"Oh, I know my baby loves me,
I can tell my baby loves me."

Here the dark little girl got the left glove off, and Mrs. Brady glimpsed a platinum wedding ring.

"'Cause there ain't no maybe
In my baby's
Eyes."

The right glove came off. The dark little girl sat down in one of the chairs that faced the dressing table. She doffed her wrap, casting it carelessly over the chair-back. It had a cloth-of-gold lining, and "Paris" was embroidered in curlicues on the label. Mrs. Brady hovered solicitously near.

The dark little girl, still humming, looked over the articles "placed here for your convenience," and picked up the scissors. Having cut off a very small hangnail with the air of one performing a perilous major operation, she seized and used the manicure buffer, and after that the eyebrow pencil. Mrs. Brady's mind, hopefully calculating the tip, jumped and jumped again like a taximeter.

"Oh, I know my baby loves me—"

The dark little girl applied powder and lipstick belonging to herself. She examined the result searchingly in the mirror and sat back, satisfied. She cast some silver *Klink! Klink!* into Mrs.

Brady's saucer, and half rose. Then, remembering something, she settled down again.

The ensuing thirty seconds were spent by her in pulling off her platinum wedding ring, tying it in a corner of a lace handkerchief, and tucking the handkerchief down the bodice of her tight white-velvet gown.

"There!" she said.

She swooped up her wrap and trotted toward the door, jeweled heels merrily twinkling.

"'Cause there ain't no maybe—"

The door fell shut.

Almost instantly it opened again, and another girl came in. A blonde, this. She was pretty in a round-eyed babyish way; but Mrs. Brady, regarding her, mentally grabbed the spirits of ammonia bottle. For she looked terribly ill. The round eyes were dull, the pretty, silly little face was drawn. The thin hands, picking at the fastenings of a spacious bag, trembled and twitched.

Mrs. Brady cleared her throat. "Can I do something for you, Miss?"

Evidently the blonde girl had believed herself alone in the dressing room. She started violently, and glanced up, panic in her eyes. Panic, and something else. Something very like murderous hate—but for an instant only, so that Mrs. Brady, whose perceptions were never quick, missed it altogether.

"A glass of water?" suggested Mrs. Brady.

"No," said the girl, "no." She had one hand in the beaded bag now. Mrs. Brady could see it moving, causing the bag to squirm like a live thing, and the fringe to shiver. "Yes!" she cried abruptly. "A glass of water—please—you get it for me."

She dropped onto the couch. Mrs. Brady scurried to the water cooler in the corner, pressed the spigot with a determined thumb. Water trickled out thinly. Mrs. Brady pressed

harder, and scowled, and thought, "Something's wrong with this thing. I musn't forget, next time I see Mr. Costello—"

When again she faced her patient, the patient was sitting erect. She was thrusting her clenched hand back into the beaded bag again.

She took only a sip of the water, but it seemed to help her quite miraculously. Almost at once color came to her cheeks, life to her eyes. She grew young again—as young as she was. She smiled up at Mrs. Brady.

"Well!" she exclaimed. "What do you know about that!" She shook her honey-colored head. "I can't imagine what came over me."

"Are you better now?" inquired Mrs. Brady.

"Yes, oh, yes, I'm better now. You see," said the blonde girl confidentially, "we were at the theater, my boy friend and I, and it was hot and stuffy—I guess that must have been the trouble." She paused, and the ghost of her recent distress crossed her face. "God! I thought that last act *never* would end!" she said.

While she attended to her hair and complexion she chattered gayly to Mrs. Brady, chattered on with scarcely a stop for breath, and laughed much. She said, among other things, that she and her "boy friend" had not known one another very long, but that she was "ga-ga" about him. "He is about me, too," she confessed. "He thinks I'm grand."

She fell silent then, and in the looking-glass her eyes were shadowed, haunted. But Mrs. Brady, from where she stood, could not see the looking-glass; and half a minute later the blonde girl laughed and began again. When she went out she seemed to dance out on little winged feet; and Mrs. Brady sighing, thought it must be nice to be young . . . and happy like that.

The next arrivals were two. A tall, extremely smart young woman in black chiffon entered first, and held the door open for her companion; and the instant the door was shut, she said,

as though it had been on the tip of her tongue for hours, "Amy, what under the sun *happened*?"

Amy, who was brown-eyed, brown-bobbed-haired, and patently annoyed with something, crossed to the dressing table and flopped into a chair before she made reply.

"Nothing," she said wearily then.

"That's nonsense!" snorted the other. "Tell me. Was it something she said? She's a tactless ass, of course. Always was."

"No, not anything she said. It was—" Amy bit her lip. "All right! I'll tell you. Before we left your apartment I just happened to notice that Tom had disappeared. So I went to look for him—I wanted to ask him if he'd remembered to tell the maid where we were going—Skippy's subject to croup, you know, and we always leave word. Well, so I went into the kitchen, thinking Tom might be there mixing cocktails—and there he was—and there *she* was!"

The full red mouth of the other young woman pursed itself slightly. Her arched brows lifted. "Well?"

Her matter-of-factness appeared to infuriate Amy. "He was *kissing* her!" she flung out.

"Well?" said the other again. She chuckled softly and patted Amy's shoulder, as if it were the shoulder of a child. "You're surely not going to let *that* spoil your whole evening? Amy *dear!* Kissing may once have been serious and significant —but it isn't nowadays. Nowadays, it's like shaking hands. It means nothing."

But Amy was not consoled. "I hate her!" she cried desperately. "Red-headed *thing!* Calling me 'darling' and 'honey,' and s-sending me handkerchiefs for C-Christmas—and then sneaking off behind closed doors and k-kissing my h-h-husband . . ."

At this point Amy quite broke down, but she recovered herself sufficiently to add with venom, "I'd like to slap her!"

"Oh, oh, oh," smiled the tall young woman, "I wouldn't do that!"

Amy wiped her eyes with what might well have been one of the Christmas handkerchiefs, and confronted her friend. "Well what *would* you do, Claire? If you were I?"

"I'd forget it," said Claire, "and have a good time. I'd kiss somebody myself. You've no idea how much better you'd feel!"

"I don't do—" Amy began indignantly; but as the door behind her opened and a third young woman—red-headed, earringed, exquisite—lilted in, she changed her tone. "Oh, hello!" she called sweetly, beaming at the newcomer via the mirror. "We were wondering what had become of you!"

The red-headed girl, smiling easily back, dropped her cigarette on the floor and crushed it out with a silver-shod toe. "Tom and I were talking to 'Fiddle' Baer," she explained. "He's going to play 'Clap Yo' Hands' next, because it's my favorite. Lend me a comb, will you, somebody?"

"There's a comb there," said Claire, indicating Mrs. Brady's business comb.

"But imagine using it!" murmured the red-headed girl. "Amy darling, haven't you one?"

Amy produced a tiny comb from her rhinestone purse. "Don't forget to bring it when you come," she said, and stood up. "I'm going on out; I want to tell Tom something."

She went.

The red-headed young woman and the tall black-chiffon one were alone, except for Mrs. Brady. The red-headed one beaded her incredible lashes. The tall one, the one called Claire, sat watching her. Presently she said, "Sylvia, look here." And Sylvia looked. Anybody, addressed in that tone, would have.

"There is one thing," Claire went on quietly, holding the other's eyes, "that I want understood. And that is, '*Hands off!*' Do you hear me?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"You do know what I mean!"

The red-headed girl shrugged her shoulders. "Amy told you she saw us, I suppose."

"Precisely. And," went on Claire, gathering up her possessions and rising, "as I said before, you're to keep away." Her eyes blazed sudden white-hot rage. "Because, as you very well know, he belongs to *me*," she said and departed, slamming the door.

Between eleven o'clock and one Mrs. Brady was very busy indeed. Never for more than a moment during those two hours was the dressing room empty. Often it was jammed, full to overflowing with curled cropped heads, with ivory arms and shoulders, with silk and lace and chiffon, with legs. The door flapped in and back, in and back. The mirrors caught and held —and lost—a hundred different faces. Powder veiled the dressing table with a thin white dust; cigarette stubs, scarlet at the tips, choked the ash-receiver. Dimes and quarters clattered into Mrs. Brady's saucer—and were transferred to Mrs. Brady's purse. The original seventy cents remained. That much, and no more, would Mrs. Brady gamble on the integrity of womankind.

She earned her money. She threaded needles and took stitches. She powdered the backs of necks. She supplied towels for soapy, drippy hands. She removed a speck from a teary blue eye and pounded the heel on a slipper. She curled the straggling ends of a black bob and a gray bob, pinned a velvet flower on a lithe round waist, mixed three doses of bicarbonate of soda, took charge of a shed pink-satin girdle, collected, on hands and knees, several dozen fake pearls that had wept from a broken string.

She served chorus girls and school girls, gay young matrons and gayer young mistresses, a lady who had divorced four husbands, and a lady who had poisoned one, the secret (more or less) sweetheart of a Most Distinguished Name, and the

Brains of a bootleg gang. . . . She saw things. She saw a yellow check, with the ink hardly dry. She saw four tiny bruises, such as fingers might make, on an arm. She saw a girl strike another girl, not playfully. She saw a bundle of letters some man wished he had not written, safe and deep in a brocaded handbag.

About midnight the door flew open and at once was pushed shut, and a gray-eyed, lovely child stood backed against it, her palms flattened on the panels at the sides, the draperies of her white chiffon gown settling lightly to rest around her.

There were already five damsels of varying ages in the dressing room. The latest arrival marked their presence with a flick of her eyes and, standing just where she was, she called peremptorily, "Maid!"

Mrs. Brady, standing just where *she* was, said, "Yes, Miss?"

"Please come here," said the girl.

Mrs. Brady, as slowly as she dared, did so.

The girl lowered her voice to a tense half-whisper. "Listen! Is there any way I can get out of here except through this door I came in?"

Mrs. Brady stared at her stupidly.

"Any window?" persisted the girl. "Or anything?"

Here they were interrupted by the exodus of two of the damsels-of-varying ages. Mrs. Brady opened the door for them —and in so doing caught a glimpse of a man who waited in the hall outside, a debonair, old-young man with a girl's furry wrap hung over his arm, and his hat in his hand.

The door clicked. The gray-eyed girl moved out from the wall, against which she had flattened herself—for all the world like one eluding pursuit in a cinema.

"What about that window?" she demanded, pointing.

"That's all the farther it opens," said Mrs. Brady.

"Oh! And it's the only one—isn't it?"

"It is."

"Damn," said the girl. "Then there's *no* way out?"

"No way but the door," said Mrs. Brady testily.

The girl looked at the door. She seemed to look *through* the door, and to despise and to fear what she saw. Then she looked at Mrs. Brady. "Well," she said, "then I s'pose the only thing to do is to stay in here."

She stayed. Minutes ticked by. Jazz crooned distantly, stopped, struck up again. Other girls came and went. Still the gray-eyed girl sat on the couch, with her back to the wall and her shapely legs crossed, smoking cigarettes, one from the stub of another.

After a long while she said, "Maid!"

"Yes, Miss?"

"Peek out that door, will you, and see if there's anyone standing there."

Mrs. Brady peeked, and reported that there was. There was a gentleman with a little bit of a black mustache standing there. The same gentleman, in fact, who was standing there "just after you come in."

"Oh, Lord," sighed the gray-eyed girl. "Well . . . I can't stay here all *night*, that's one sure thing."

She slid off the couch, and went listlessly to the dressing table. There she occupied herself for a minute or two. Suddenly, without a word, she darted out.

Thirty seconds later Mrs. Brady was elated to find two crumpled one-dollar bills lying in her saucer. Her joy, however, died a premature death. For she made an almost simultaneous second discovery. A saddening one. Above all, a puzzling one.

"Now what for," marveled Mrs. Brady, "did she want to walk off with them *scissors?*"

This at twelve-twenty-five.

At twelve-thirty a quartette of excited young things burst in, babbling madly. All of them had their evening wraps with them; all talked at once. One of them, a Dresden-china girl with a heart-shaped face, was the center of attention. Around her the rest fluttered like monstrous butterflies; to her they ad-

dressed their shrill exclamatory cries. "Babe," they called her.

Mrs. Brady heard snatches: "Not in this state unless . . ."

"Well you can in Maryland, Jimmy says." "Oh, there must be some place nearer than . . ." "Isn't this *marvelous?*" "When did it happen, Baby? When did you decide?"

"Just now," the girl with the heart-shaped face sang softly, "when we were dancing."

The babble resumed. "But listen, Babe, what'll your mother and father . . . ?" "Oh, never mind, let's hurry." "Shall we be warm enough with just these thin wraps, do you think? Babe, will you be warm enough? Sure?"

Powder flew and little pocket combs marched through bright marcels. Flushed cheeks were painted pinker still.

"My pearls," said Babe, "are *old.* And my dress and my slippers are *new.* Now let's see—what can I *borrow?*"

A lace handkerchief, a diamond bar-pin, a pair of earrings were proffered. She chose the bar-pin, and its owner unpinned it proudly, gladly.

"I've got blue garters!" exclaimed another girl.

"Give me one, then," directed Babe. "I'll trade with you. . . . There! That fixes that."

More babbling, "Hurry! Hurry . . ." "Listen, are you *sure* we'll be warm enough? Because we can stop at my house, there's nobody home." "Give me that puff, Babe, I'll powder your back." "And just to think a week ago you'd never even met each other!" "Oh, hurry *up,* let's get *started!*" "I'm ready." "So'm I!" "Ready, Babe? You look adorable." "Come on, everybody."

They were gone again, and the dressing room seemed twice as still and vacant as before.

A minute of grace, during which Mrs. Brady wiped the spilled powder away with a damp gray rag. Then the door jumped open again. Two evening gowns appeared and made for the dressing table in a bee line. Slim tubular gowns they were, one silver, one palest yellow. Yellow hair went with the

silver gown, brown hair with the yellow. The silver-gowned, yellow-haired girl wore orchids on her shoulder, three of them, and a flashing bracelet on each fragile wrist. The other girl looked less prosperous; still, you would rather have looked at her.

Both ignored Mrs. Brady's cosmetic display as utterly as they ignored Mrs. Brady, producing full field equipment of their own.

"Well," said the girl with the orchids, rouging energetically, "how do you like him?"

"Oh-h—all right."

"Meaning, 'Not any,' hmm? I suspected as much!" The girl with the orchids turned in her chair and scanned her companion's profile with disapproval. "See here, Marilee," she drawled, "are you going to be a damn fool *all* your life?"

"He's fat," said Marilee dreamily. "Fat, and—greasy, sort of. I mean, greasy in his mind. Don't you know what I mean?"

"I know *one* thing," declared the girl with the orchids. "I know Who He Is! And if I were you, that's all I'd need to know. *Under the circumstances.*"

The last three words, stressed meaningly, affected the girl called Marilee curiously. She grew grave. Her lips and lashes drooped. For some seconds she sat frowning a little, breaking a black-sheathed lipstick in two and fitting it together again.

"She's worse," she said finally, low.

"Worse?"

Marilee nodded.

"Well," said the girl with the orchids, "there you are. It's the climate. She'll never be anything *but* worse, if she doesn't get away. Out West, or somewhere."

"I know," murmured Marilee.

The other girl opened a tin of eye shadow. "Of course," she said dryly, "suit yourself. She's not *my* sister."

Marilee said nothing. Quiet she sat, breaking the lipstick, mending it, breaking it.

"Oh, well," she breathed finally, wearily, and straightened up. She propped her elbows on the plate-glass dressing-table top and leaned toward the mirror, and with the lipstick she began to make her coral-pink mouth very red and gay and reckless and alluring.

Nightly at one o'clock Vane and Moreno dance for the Club Français. They dance a tango, they dance a waltz; then, by way of encore, they do a Black Bottom, and a trick of their own called the Wheel. They dance for twenty, thirty minutes. And while they dance you do not leave your table—for this is what you came to see. Vane and Moreno. The new New York thrill. The sole justification for the five-dollar couvert extorted by Billy Costello.

From one until half past, then, was Mrs. Brady's recess. She had been looking forward to it all the evening long. When it began—when the opening chords of the tango music sounded stirringly from the room outside—Mrs. Brady brightened. With a right good will she sped the parting guests.

Alone, she unlocked her cupboard and took out her magazine—the magazine she had bought three hours before. Heaving a great breath of relief and satisfaction, she plumped herself on the couch and fingered the pages. Immediately she was absorbed, her eyes drinking up printed lines, her lips moving soundlessly.

The magazine was Mrs. Brady's favorite. Its stories were true stories, taken from life (so the Editor said); and to Mrs. Brady they were live, vivid threads in the dull, drab pattern of her night.

JAMES GOULD COZZENS

Total Stranger

CLAD IN A LONG GRAY DUSTER, wearing a soft gray cap, my father, who was short and strong, sat bolt upright. Stiffly, he held his gauntleted hands straight out on the wheel. The car jiggled, scurrying along the narrow New England country road. Sometimes, indignant, my father drove faster. Then to emphasize what he was saying, and for no other reason, he drove much slower. Though he was very fond of driving, he drove as badly as most people who had grown up before there were cars to drive.

"Well," I said, "I can't help it."

"Of course you can help it!" my father snorted, adding speed. His severe, dark mustache seemed to bristle a little. He had on tinted sunglasses, and he turned them on me.

"For heaven's sake, look what you are doing!" I cried. He looked just in time, but neither his dignity nor his train of thought was shaken. He continued: "Other boys help it, don't they?"

"If you'd just let me finish," I began elaborately. "If you'd just give me a chance to—"

"Go on, go on," he said. "Only don't tell me you can't help it! I'm very tired of hearing—"

"Well, it's mostly Mr. Clifford," I said. "He has it in for me. And if you want to know why, it's because I'm not one of his

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gang of bootlickers, who hang around his study to bum some tea, every afternoon practically." As I spoke, I could really feel that I would spurn an invitation so dangerous to my independence. The fact that Mr. Clifford rarely spoke to me except to give me another hour's detention became a point in my favor. "So, to get back at me, he tells the Old Man—"

"Do you mean Doctor Holt?"

"Everyone calls him that. Why shouldn't I?"

"If you were a little more respectful, perhaps you wouldn't be in trouble all the time."

"I'm not in trouble all the time. I'm perfectly respectful. This year I won't be in the dormitory any more, so Snifty can't make up a lot of lies about me."

My father drove dashing past a farmhouse in a billow of dust and flurry of panic-struck chickens. "Nonsense!" he said. "Sheer nonsense! Doctor Holt wrote that after a long discussion in faculty meeting he was satisfied that your attitude—"

"Oh, my attitude!" I groaned. "For heaven's sake, a fellow's attitude! Of course, I don't let Snifty walk all over me. What do you think I am? That's what that means. It means that I'm not one of Snifty's little pets, hanging around to bum some tea."

"You explained about the tea before," my father said. "I don't feel that it quite covers the case. How about the other masters? Do they also expect you to come around and take tea with them? When they tell the headmaster that you make no effort to do your work, does that mean that they are getting back at you?"

I drew a deep breath in an effort to feel less uncomfortable. Though I was experienced in defending myself, and with my mother could do it very successfully, there was a certain remote solemnity about my father which made me falter. From my standpoint, I had reason to know, my remarks would form nothing but a puerile exhibition of sorry nonsense. The result was that he avoided, as long as he could, these serious discus-

sions, and I avoided, as long as I could, any discussions at all.

I said laboriously, "Well, I don't think they told him that. Not all of them. And I can prove it, because didn't I get promoted with my form? What did I really flunk, except maybe algebra? I suppose Mr. Blackburn was the one who said it." I nodded several times, as though it confirmed my darkest suspicions.

My father said frigidly, "In view of the fact that your grade for the year was forty-four, I wouldn't expect him to be exactly delighted with you."

"Well, I can tell you something about that," I said, ill at ease, but sufficiently portentous. "You can ask anyone. He's such a bum teacher that you don't learn anything in his courses. He can't even explain the simplest thing. Why, once he was working out a problem on the board, and I had to laugh, he couldn't get it himself. Until finally one of the fellows who is pretty good in math had to show him where he made a mistake even a first former wouldn't make. And that's how good he is."

My father said, "Now, I don't want any more argument. I simply want you to understand that this fall term will be your last chance. Doctor Holt is disgusted with you. I want you to think how your mother would feel if you disgrace her by being dropped at Christmas. I want you to stop breaking rules and wasting time."

He let the car slow down for emphasis. He gave me a look, at once penetrating and baffled. He could see no sense in breaking the simple, necessary rules of any organized society; and wasting time was worse than wrong, it was mad and dissolute. Time lost, he very well knew, can never be recovered. Left to himself, my father's sensible impulse would probably have been to give me a thrashing I'd remember. But this was out of the question, for my mother had long ago persuaded him that he, too, believed in reasoning with a child.

Looking at me, he must have found the results of reasoning as unimpressive as ever. He said, with restrained grimness,

"And if you're sent home, don't imagine that you can go back to the academy. You'll go straight into the public school and stay there. So just remember that."

"Oh, I'll remember all right," I nodded significantly. I had not spent the last two years without, on a number of occasions, having to think seriously about what I'd do if I were expelled. I planned to approach a relative of mine connected with a steamship company and get a job on a boat.

"See that you do!" said my father. We looked at each other with mild antagonism. Though I was still full of arguments, I knew that none of them would get me anywhere, and I was, as always, a little alarmed and depressed by my father's demonstrable rightness about everything. In my position, I supposed that he would always do his lessons, never break any rules, and probably end up a prefect, with his rowing colors and a football letter—in fact, with everything that I would like, if only the first steps toward them did not seem so dull and difficult. Since they did, I was confirmed in my impression that it was impossible to please him. Since it was impossible, I had long been resolved not to care whether I pleased him or not. Practice had made not caring fairly easy.

As for my father, surely he viewed me with much the same resentful astonishment. My mother was accustomed to tell him that he did not understand me. He must have been prepared to believe it; indeed, he must have wondered if he understood anything when he tried to reconcile such facts as my marks with such contentions as my mother's that I had a brilliant mind. At the moment he could doubtless think of nothing else to say; so he drove faster, as if he wanted to get away from the whole irksome matter; but suddenly the movement of the car was altered by a series of heavy, jolting bumps.

"Got a flat," I said with satisfaction and relief. "Didn't I tell you? Everybody knows those tires pick up nails. You can ask anybody."

My father edged the limping car to the side of the road. In

those days you had to expect punctures if you drove any distance, so my father was not particularly put out. He may have been glad to get his mind off a discussion which was not proving very profitable. When we had changed the tire—we had demountable rims, which made it wonderfully easy, as though you were putting something over on a puncture—we were both in better spirits and could resume our normal, polite and distant attitudes. That is, what I said was noncommittal, but not impertinent; and what he said was perfunctory, but not hostile. We got into Sansbury at five o'clock, having covered one hundred and three miles, which passed at the time for a long, hard drive.

When my father drove me up to school, we always stopped at Sansbury. The hotel was not a good or comfortable one, but it was the only convenient place to break the journey. Sansbury was a fair-sized manufacturing town, and the hotel got enough business from traveling salesmen—who, of course, traveled by train—to operate in a shabby way something like a metropolitan hotel. It had a gloomy little lobby with rows of huge armchairs and three or four imitation-marble pillars. There were two surly bellboys, one about twelve, the other about fifty. The elevator, already an antique, was made to rise by pulling on a cable. In the dark dining room a few sad, patient, middle-aged waitresses distributed badly cooked food, much of it, for some reason, served in separate little dishes of the heaviest possible china. It was all awful.

But this is in retrospect. At the time I thought the hotel more pleasant than not. My father had the habit, half stoical, half insensitive, of making the best of anything there was. Though he acted with promptness and decision when it was in his power to change circumstances, he did not grumble when it wasn't. If the food was bad, favored by an excellent digestion, he ate it anyway. If his surroundings were gloomy and the company either boring to him or nonexistent, he did not fidget.

When he could find one of the novels at the moment seri-

ously regarded, he would read it critically. When he couldn't, he would make notes on business affairs in a shorthand of his own invention which nobody else could read. When he had no notes to make, he would retire, without fuss or regret, into whatever his thoughts were.

I had other ideas of entertainment. At home I was never allowed to go to the moving pictures, for my mother considered the films themselves silly and cheap, and the theaters likely to be infested with germs. Away from home, I could sometimes pester my father into taking me. As we moved down the main street of Sansbury—my father serenely terrorizing all the rest of the traffic—I was watching to see what was at the motion-picture theater. To my chagrin, it proved to be Annette Kellerman in *A Daughter of the Gods,* and I could be sure I wouldn't be taken to that.

The hotel garage was an old stable facing the kitchen wing across a yard of bare dirt forlornly stained with oil. My father halted in the middle of it and honked his horn until finally the fifty-year-old bellboy appeared, scowling. While my father had an argument with him over whether luggage left in the car would be safe, I got out. Not far away there stood another car. The hood was up, and a chauffeur in his shirt sleeves had extracted and spread out on a sheet of old canvas an amazing array of parts. The car itself was a big impressive landaulet with carriage lamps at the doorposts. I moved toward it and waited until the chauffeur noticed me.

"What's the trouble?" I inquired professionally.

Busy with a wrench, he grunted, "Cam shaft."

"Oh! How much'll she do?"

"Hundred miles an hour."

"Ah, go on!"

"Beat it," he said. "I got no time."

My father called me, and, aggrieved, I turned away, for I felt sure that I had been treated with so little respect because

I had been compelled to save my clothes by wearing for the trip an old knickerbocker suit and a gray cloth hat with the scarlet monogram of a summer camp I used to go to on it. Following the aged bellboy through the passage toward the lobby, I said to my father, "Well, I guess I'll go up and change."

My father said, "There's no necessity for that. Just see that you wash properly, and you can take a bath before you go to bed."

"I don't see how I can eat in a hotel, looking like this," I said. "I should think you'd want me to look halfway respectable. I—"

"Nonsense!" said my father. "If you wash your face and hands, you'll look perfectly all right."

The aged bellboy dumped the bags indignantly, and my father went up to the imitation-marble desk to register. The clerk turned the big book around and gave him a pen. I wanted to sign myself; so I was standing close to him, watching him write in his quick, scratchy script, when suddenly the pen paused. He held his hand, frowning a little.

"Come on," I said, "I want to—"

"Now, you can just wait until I finish," he answered. When he had finished, he let me have the pen. To the clerk he said, "Curious coincidence! I used to know someone by that name." He stopped short, gave the clerk a cold, severe look, as though he meant to indicate that the fellow would be well advised to attend to his own business, and turned away.

The elevator was upstairs. While we stood listening to its creeping, creaky descent, my father said "Hm!" and shook his head several times. The lighted cage came into view. My father gazed at it a moment. Then he said "Hm!" again. It came shaking to a halt in front of us. The door opened, and a woman walked out. Her eyes went over us in a brief, impersonal glance. She took two steps, pulled up short, and looked at us again. Then, with a sort of gasp, she said, "Why, Will!"

My father seemed to have changed color a little, but he spoke with his ordinary equability: "How are you, May? I had an idea it might be you."

She came right up to him. She put her hand on his arm. "Will!" she repeated. "Well, now, honestly!" She gave his arm a quick squeeze, tapped it and dropped her hand. "Will, I can't believe it! Isn't it funny! You know, I never planned to stop here. If that wretched car hadn't broken down—"

I was looking at her with blank curiosity, and I saw at once that she was pretty—though not in the sense in which you applied pretty to a girl, exactly. In a confused way, she seemed to me to look more like a picture—the sort of woman who might appear on a completed jigsaw puzzle, or on the back of a pack of cards. Her skin had a creamy, powdered tone. Her eyes had a soft, gay shine which I knew from unconscious observation was not usual in a mature face. Her hair was just so. Very faint, yet very distinct, too, the smell of violets reached me. Although she was certainly not wearing anything resembling evening dress, and, in fact, had a hat on, something about her made me think of my mother when she was ready to go to one of the dances they called assemblies, or of the mothers of my friends who came to dinner looking not at all as they usually looked. I was so absorbed in this feeling of strangeness —I neither liked it nor disliked it; it simply bewildered me— that I didn't hear anything until my father said rather sharply, "John! Say how do you do to Mrs. Prentice!"

"I can't get over it!" she was saying. She broke into a kind of bubbling laughter. "Why, he's grown up, Will! Oh, dear, doesn't it make you feel queer?"

Ordinarily, I much resented that adult trick of talking about you as if you weren't there, but the grown-up was all right, and she looked at me without a trace of the customary patronage; as though, of course, I saw the joke too. She laughed again. I would not have had the faintest idea why, yet I was obliged to laugh in response.

She asked brightly, "Where's Hilda?"

My father answered, with slight constraint, that my mother was not with us, that he was just driving me up to school.

Mrs. Prentice said, "Oh, that's too bad. I'd so like to see her." She smiled at me again and said, "Will, I can't face that dreadful dining room. I was going to have something sent up. They've given me what must be the bridal suite." She laughed. "You should see it! Why don't we all have supper up there?"

"Capital!" my father said.

The word astonished me. I was more or less familiar with most of my father's expressions, and that certainly was not one of them. I thought it sounded funny, but Mrs. Prentice said, "Will, you haven't changed a bit! But then, you wouldn't. It comes from having such a wonderful disposition."

The aged bellboy had put our luggage in the elevator and shuffled his feet beside it, glowering at us. "Leave the supper to me," my father said. "I'll see if something fit to eat can be ordered. We'll be down in about half an hour."

In our room, my father gave the aged bellboy a quarter. It was more than a bellboy in a small-town hotel would ever expect to get, and so, more than my father would normally give, for he was very exact in money matters and considered lavishness not only wasteful but rather common, and especially bad for the recipient, since it made him dissatisfied when he was given what he really deserved. He said to me, "You can go in the bathroom first, and see that you wash your neck and ears. If you can get your blue suit out without unpacking everything else, change to that."

While I was splashing around I could hear him using the telephone. It did not work very well, but he must eventually have prevailed over it, for when I came out he had unpacked his shaving kit. With the strop hung on a clothes hook, he was whacking a razor up and down. Preoccupied, he sang, or rather grumbled, to himself, for he was completely tone-deaf: "I am the monarch of the sea, the ruler of the Queen's—."

The room where we found Mrs. Prentice was quite a big one, with a large dark-green carpet on the floor, and much carved furniture, upholstered where possible in green velvet of the color of the carpet. Long full glass curtains and green velvet drapes shrouded the windows; so the lights—in brass wall brackets and a wonderfully coiled and twisted chandelier—were on. There was also an oil painting in a great gold frame showing a group of red-trousered French soldiers defending a farmhouse against the Prussians—the type of art I liked most. It all seemed to me tasteful and impressive, but Mrs. Prentice said, "Try not to look at it!" She and my father both laughed.

"I don't know what we'll get," my father said. "I did what I could."

"Anything will do," she said. "Will, you're a godsend! I was expiring for a cocktail, but I hated to order one by myself."

I was startled. My father was not a drinking man. At home I could tell when certain people were coming to dinner, for a tray with glasses and a decanter of sherry would appear in the living room about the time I was going upstairs, and a bottle of sauterne would be put in the icebox.

My mother usually had a rehearsal after the table was set, to make sure that the maid remembered how wine was poured.

Sometimes, when I was at the tennis club, my father would bring me into the big room with the bar and we would both have lemonades. I had never actually seen him drink anything else, so I had an impression that drinking was unusual and unnecessary. I even felt that it was reprehensible, since I knew that the man who took care of the garden sometimes had to be spoken to about it.

To my astonishment, my father said, as though it were the most natural thing in the world, "Well, we can't let you expire, May. What'll it be?"

She said, "I'd love a Clover Club, Will. Do you suppose they could make one?"

My father said, "We'll soon find out! But I think I'd better

go down and superintend it myself. That bar looks the reverse of promising."

Left alone with Mrs. Prentice, my amazement kept me vaguely uncomfortable. I studied the exciting details of the fight for the farmhouse, but I was self-conscious, for I realized that she was looking at me. When I looked at her, she was lighting a gold-tipped cigarette which she had taken from a white cardboard box on the table. She seemed to understand something of my confusion. She said, "Many years ago your father and I were great friends, John. After I was married, I went to England to live—to London. I was there until my husband died, so we didn't see each other. That's why we were both so surprised."

I could not think of anything to say. Mrs. Prentice tried again. "You two must have wonderful times together," she said. "He's a lot of fun, isn't he?"

Embarrassed, I inadvertently nodded; and thinking that she had found the right subject, she went on warmly, "He was always the most wonderful swimmer and tennis player, and a fine cyclist. I don't know how many cups he took for winning the century run."

Of course, I had often seen my father play tennis. He played it earnestly, about as well as a strong but short-legged amateur who didn't have much time for it could. He was a powerful swimmer, but he did not impress me particularly, even when he swam, as he was fond of doing, several miles; for he never employed anything but a measured, monotonous breast stroke which moved him through the water with unbending dignity. It was very boring to be in the boat accompanying him across some Maine lake. I could as easily imagine my father playing tag or trading cigarette pictures as riding a bicycle.

Mrs. Prentice must have wondered what was wrong with me. She could see that I ought to be past the stage when overpowering shyness would be natural. She must have known, too, that she had a more than ordinary gift for attracting people

and putting them at ease. No doubt, her failure with me mildly vexed and amused her.

She arose, saying, "Oh, I forgot! I have something." She swept into the room beyond. In a moment she came back with a box in her hands. I had stood up awkwardly when she stood up. She brought the box to me. It was very elaborate. A marvelous arrangement of candied fruits and chocolates filled it. I said, "Thank you very much," I took the smallest and plainest piece of chocolate I could see.

"You mustn't spoil your appetite, must you?" she said, her eyes twinkling, "You take what you want. We won't tell your father."

Her air of cordial conspiracy really warmed me. I tried to smile, but I didn't find myself any more articulate. I said again, "Thank you. This is really all I want."

"All right, John," she said. "We'll leave it on the desk there, in case you change your mind."

The door, which had stood ajar, swung open. In came my father, carrying a battered cocktail shaker wrapped in a napkin. He headed a procession made up of the young bellboy, with a folding table; the old bellboy, with a tray of silver and glasses and folded linen.

"Why, Will," Mrs. Prentice cried, "it's just like magic!"

My father said, "What it will be just like, I'm afraid, is the old Ocean House."

"Oh, oh!" Mrs. Prentice laughed. "The sailing parties! You know, I haven't thought of those—and those awful buffet suppers!"

"Very good," my father said, looking at the completed efforts of his procession. "Please try to see that the steak is rare and gets here hot. That's all." He filled two glasses with pink liquid from the cocktail shaker. He brought one of them to Mrs. Prentice, and, lifting the other, said, "Well, May, Moonlight Bay!"

She looked at him, quick and intent. She began quizzically

to smile. It seemed to me she blushed a little. "All right, Will," she said and drank.

They were both silent for an instant. Then, with a kind of energetic abruptness, she said, "Lottie Frazer! Oh, Will, do you know, I saw Lottie a month or two ago."

I sat quiet, recognizing adult conversation and knowing that it would be dull. I fixed my eyes on the battle picture. I tried to imagine myself behind the mottled stone wall with the French infantrymen, but constantly I heard Mrs. Prentice laugh. My father kept responding, but with an odd, light, good-humored inflection, as though he knew that she would laugh again as soon as he finished speaking. I could not make my mind stay on the usually engrossing business of thinking myself into a picture.

". . . you were simply furious," I heard Mrs. Prentice saying. "I didn't blame you."

My father said, "I guess I was."

"You said you'd break his neck."

They had my full attention, but I had missed whatever it was, for my father only responded, "Poor old Fred!" and looked thoughtfully at his glass. "So you're going back?"

Mrs. Prentice nodded. "This isn't really home to me. Becky and I are—well, I can hardly believe we're sisters. She disapproves of me so."

"I don't remember Becky ever approving of anything," my father said. "There's frankness for you."

"Oh, but she approved of you!" Mrs. Prentice looked at him a moment.

"I never knew it," said my father. "She had a strange way of showing it. I had the impression that she thought I was rather wild, and hanging would be too good—"

"Oh, Will, the things you never knew!" Mrs. Prentice shook her head. "And of course, the person Becky really couldn't abide was Joe. They never spoke to each other. Not even at the wedding." Mrs. Prentice gazed at me, but abstractedly,

without expression. She started to look back to my father, stopped herself, gave me a quick little smile, and then looked back. My father was examining his glass.

"Ah, well," he said, " 'there is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them—' "

Mrs. Prentice smiled. "Do you still write poetry?" she asked.

My father looked at her as though taken aback. "No," he said. He chuckled, but not with composure. "And what's more, I never did."

"Oh, but I think I could say some of it to you."

"Don't," said my father. "I'm afraid I was a very pretentious young man." At that moment, dinner arrived on two trays under a number of big metal covers.

I thought the dinner was good, and ate all that was offered me; yet eating seemed to form no more than a pleasant, hardly noticed undercurrent to my thoughts. From time to time I looked at the empty cocktail glasses or the great box of candied fruits and chocolates. I stole glances at Mrs. Prentice's pretty, lively face. Those fragments of conversation repeated themselves to me.

Intently, vainly, I considered "century run," "Ocean House," "Moonlight Bay." I wondered about Fred, whose neck, it seemed, my father thought of breaking; about this Becky and what she approved of; and about the writing of poetry. My mother had done a good deal to acquaint me with poetry. She read things like "Adonais," the "Ode to a Nightingale," "The Hound of Heaven" to me; and though I did not care much for them, I knew enough about poets to know that my father had little in common with pictures of Shelley and Keats. I had never seen a picture of Francis Thompson, but I could well imagine.

Thus I had already all I could handle; and though talk went on during the meal, I hardly heard what they were saying. My attention wasn't taken until Mrs. Prentice, pouring coffee from a little pot, said something about the car.

My father accepted the small cup and answered, "I don't know that it's wise."

"But I've just got to," she said. "I can't make the boat unless—"

"Well, if you've got to, you've got to," my father said. "Are you sure he knows the roads? There are one or two places where you can easily make the wrong turn. I think I'd better get a map I have and mark it for you. It will only take a moment."

"Oh, Will," she said, "that would be such a help."

My father set his cup down and arose with decision. When we were alone, Mrs. Prentice got up too. As I had been taught to, I jumped nervously to my feet. She went and took the box from the desk and brought it to me again.

"Thank you very much," I stammered. I found another small plain piece of chocolate. "I'm going to put the cover on," she said, "and you take it with you."

I made a feeble protesting sound. I was aware that I ought not to accept such a considerable present from a person I did not know, but I realized that, with it, I was bound to be very popular on my arrival—at least, until the evening school meeting, when anything left would have to be turned in.

She could see my painful indecision. She set the box down. She gave a clear warm laugh, extended a hand and touched me on the chin. "John, you're a funny boy!" she said. My mother had sometimes addressed those very words to me, but with an air of great regret; meaning that the way I had just spoken or acted, while not quite deserving punishment, saddened her. Mrs. Prentice's tone was delighted, as though the last thing she meant to do was reprove me. "You don't like strangers to bother you, do you?"

The touch of her hand so astonished me that I hadn't moved a muscle. "I didn't think you were, at first," she said, "but you are! You don't look very much like him, but you can't imagine how exactly—" She broke into that delighted little laugh again.

Without warning, she bent forward and kissed my cheek.

I was frightfully embarrassed. My instant reaction was a sense of deep outrage, for I thought that I had been made to look like a child and a fool. Collecting my wits took me a minute, however; and I found then that I was not angry at all. My first fear—that she might mean to imply that I was just a baby or a little boy—was too clearly unfounded. I was not sure just what she did mean, but part of it, I realized, was that I had pleased her somehow, that she had suddenly felt a liking for me, and that people she liked, she kissed.

I stood rigid, my face scarlet. She went on at once: "Will you do something for me, John? Run down and see if you can find my chauffeur. His name is Alex. Tell him to bring the car around as soon as he can. Would you do that?"

"Yes, Mrs. Prentice," I said.

I left the room quickly. It was only the second floor, so I found the stairs instead of waiting for the elevator. I went down slowly, gravely and bewildered, thinking of my father and how extraordinary it all was; how different he seemed, and yet I could see, too, that he really hadn't changed. What he said and did was new to me, but not new to him. Somehow it all fitted together. I could feel that.

I came into the lobby and went down the back passage and out to the yard. It was now lighted by an electric bulb in a tin shade over the stable door. A flow of thin light threw shadows upon the bare earth. The hood of the big landaulet was down in place, and the man was putting some things away. "Alex!" I said authoritatively.

He turned sharp, and I said, "Mrs. Prentice wants you to bring the car around at once." He continued to look at me a moment. Then he smiled broadly. He touched his cap and said, "Very good, sir."

When I got back upstairs, my father had returned. The old bellboy was taking out a couple of bags. After a moment Mrs.

Prentice came from the other room with a coat on and a full veil pinned over her face and hat. "Thank you, John," she said to me. "Don't forget this." She nodded at the big box on the table. I blushed and took it.

"Aren't you going to thank Mrs. Prentice?" my father asked.

She said, "Oh, Will, he's thanked me already. Don't bother him."

"Bother him!" said my father. "He's not bothered. Why, I can remember my father saying to me, 'Step up here, sir, and I'll mend your manners!' And for less than not saying thank you. I'm slack, but I know my parental duties."

They both laughed, and I found myself laughing too. We all went out to the elevator.

In front of the hotel, at the bottom of the steps, the car stood. "Just see he follows the map," my father said. "You can't miss it." He looked at the sky. "Fine moonlight night! I wouldn't mind driving myself."

"Will," said Mrs. Prentice, "Will!" She took his hand in both of hers and squeezed it. "Oh, I hate to say good-by like this! Why, I've hardly seen you at all!"

"There," said my father. "It's wonderful to have seen you, May."

She turned her veiled face toward me. "Well, John! Have a grand time at school!"

I said, "Good-by, Mrs. Prentice. Thank you very much for the—"

The chauffeur held the door open, and my father helped her in. There was a thick click of the latch closing. The chauffeur went around to his seat. We stood on the pavement, waiting while he started the engine. The window was down a little, and I could hear Mrs. Prentice saying, "Good-by, good-by."

My father waved a hand, and the car drew away with a quiet, powerful drone. It passed, the sound fading, lights glinting on it, down the almost empty street.

"Well, that's that!" said my father. He looked at me at last and said, "I think you might send a post card to your mother to tell her we got here all right."

I was feeling strangely cheerful and obedient. I thought fleetingly of making a fuss about the movies, but I decided not to. At the newsstand inside, my father bought me a post card showing a covered bridge near the town. I took it to one of the small writing tables by the wall.

"Dear Mother," I wrote with the bad pen, "arrived here safely." I paused. My father had bought a paper and, putting on his glasses, had settled in one of the big chairs. He read with close, critical attention, light shining on his largely bald head, his mustache drawn down sternly. I had seen him reading like that a hundred times, but tonight he did not look quite the same to me. I thought of Mrs. Prentice a moment, but when I came to phrase it, I could not think of anything to say. Instead, I wrote: "We drove over this bridge." I paused again for some time, watching my father read, while I pondered. I wrote: "Father and I had a serious talk. Mean to do better at school—"

Unfortunately, I never did do much better at school. But that year and the years following, I would occasionally try to, for I thought it would please my father.

JEROME WEIDMAN

Thomas Hardy's Meat

THE SMALL CAR TURNED IN from the state highway and began to pick its way slowly along the dirt road toward the farmhouse.

"Looks like a New York license," Mr. Neipert said, shooting a stream of tobacco juice across the railing of the porch as he leaned forward and squinted. It was late afternoon, and the sun was fiery as it prepared to go down behind the hills. "Don't you think?"

"That's right," I said, without moving from my chair.

"Guess it's them," Neipert said.

"I suppose," his wife said. She was in the kitchen, talking as she worked. "Hope they stay awhile."

"Letter didn't say," Neipert said. "But I guess they will. Honeymooners," he grinned at me quickly. "Coupla weeks, anyway, I guess."

"Hope so," his wife said. "Money'd come in handy."

The car drew up in front of the porch. A tall, heavy-looking man got out and stood for a moment, stretching. His hair was brown and disheveled, and his youthful face had pink splotches along the jawbone where the razor had irritated it. The muscles of his arms were accentuated by the shirt sleeves rolled tightly above the elbow, but his skin was white, as though it had never been exposed to the sun. Mr. Neipert

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walked down from the porch toward him, tugging at one of the shoulder straps of his worn overalls.

"Howdy," he said.

The newcomer smiled quickly and said, "Hello. Dowack's the name. Get our letter?"

He stuck out his hand as he spoke, and Mr. Neipert took it gingerly.

"Sure did," Neipert said. His wife came out on the porch and looked down on them, her hands in her apron. "Got it yesterday."

"I hope you got room for us," Dowack said. "I guess I should've written you a lot sooner, I suppose, but—"

"That's all right," Neipert said. "Plenty of room. Not so busy this year, anyway. Fact is, you'll practically be the only ones stoppin' over, right now."

I coughed from the semiobscurity of the porch and moved my chair a little, but nobody paid any attention. Dowack's smile broadened.

"You mean that?" he said. He stuck his head into the car. "Hear that, Jen? We're the only ones here. Boy, we got the place all to ourselves." He pulled his head out again and stopped smiling. "I mean, of course," he said to Neipert, "I'm sorry you're not *busy,* but I just mean it'll be sorta, well, you know."

"That's all right," Neipert said. He went to the rear of the car and began to unstrap the suitcases on the luggage rack. "Plan to stay long?" he asked.

"Oh, two-three weeks, maybe," Dowack said, "Depends." He opened the door of the car. "Come on, Jen," he said.

A thin young woman, with startlingly blonde hair, got out. She wore a yellow silk dress with a pale-green jacket and high-heeled shoes to match. She couldn't have been more than twenty-eight, and her little girl's face, with its small, delicate features, should have made her look younger. But somehow, because of the nearly white hair, and a sullen expression that

was almost a scowl, she looked older, older than the man who was smiling at her

Neipert picked up the suitcases and climbed the porch steps.

"This is the missus," Neipert said, nodding toward his wife as he passed her, and then introduced me.

"How d'you do," Dowack said, smiling at her and at me. But the blonde girl didn't say a word. She followed them into the house, without glancing to right or left, and that was the last I saw of her.

At dinner Dowack explained her absence.

"Jen's got a headache," he said apologetically. "She don't travel so good. The ride all the way from the city kinda shook her up."

"I know," I said with a smile. "I have the same trouble myself."

"Maybe I better fix her a bite," Mrs. Neipert said as she cleared the tables.

"No, thank you, ma'am," Dowack said. "She'll be all right. She's just gotta sleep it off, that's all."

Mr. Neipert went out to the barn, and his wife busied herself in the kitchen. Dowack and I walked out on the porch and sat down in the rockers. The sun had set, but there was enough light to see far across the rolling, dismal-looking country to the low hills that framed the valley. Dowack sat with his mouth slightly open, a faint smile on his face, staring fixedly at the dull, blue-gray landscape.

"Kinda nice, isn't it?" he said.

I nodded.

"Makes you feel sorta rested," he said.

I didn't think so, but I nodded again. There was something pleasant and boyish about him, that was entirely out of keeping with his size, and that attracted you in spite of it—or, perhaps, because of it.

"Boy," he said, "I'd like to live in a place like this the whole year round."

Even if I had shared his enthusiasm for the scenery, I would not have paid much attention to it just then. I was too busy wondering about what a strange couple they made, that hard, experienced-looking girl and this open-faced and, for all his muscles, soft-looking man.

"Why don't you?" I said.

He laughed easily.

"What a chance," he said. "Me, I got a garage to take care of, there in Jersey City."

"Jersey City?" I said. I was thinking of the New York license plates on his car.

"Yeah," he said. "Jersey City."

He turned back to the hills.

"Too bad your wife doesn't feel well," I said casually. "She's missing the scenery."

"Oh, she's got plenty of time," he said, quite naturally. "And anyway, she needs the rest after the long ride."

Perhaps she did. But unless my ears deceived me, she was not taking it in bed. Quite unmistakably, the quick, sharp clack-clack of a pair of high heels going back and forth across one of Mr. Neipert's uncarpeted floors reached us from the upper story of the farmhouse.

"Besides," he continued, "not everybody likes this kind o' country. Most people gotta get used to it. Me, though, it just comes natural to me. Boy, I love it."

He breathed deeply and noisily of the damp air and shook his head with an appreciative smile. I followed the direction of his eyes and tried to recapture the slight pleasure the hills in the distance had given me on the first day of my visit, before I had settled down to a month of rest that was being impaired slightly by a growing dislike for the landscape. But the effort was wasted. The dull scene had lost its original attraction long before, and certainly had never given me a fraction of the excitement that Dowack seemed to be getting out of it.

"Let me ask you," he said suddenly, turning toward me. "Did you ever read Thomas Hardy?"

I stared at him in amazement. I was as prepared for his question as I was for a penguin's comments on the complexities of the combustion engine.

"Why—a little," I said lamely. "Why?"

"Yeah? Well, which ones did you read?"

"Well, I don't quite remember now—" I began, embarrassed. "Oh, yes, I do, too. *The Mayor of Casterbridge*," I said.

He shook his head grudgingly.

"That one's all right," he said, "but it's the wrong one. Me, I read 'em all. Every single damn one he wrote." He waved his hand toward the darkening hills. "This is just the kind o' country he wrote about," he said.

I looked out across the valley doubtfully.

"I guess so," I said.

"You don't get it so much in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*," he said, "but the others are full of it. Jeez, he had a way of writing."

We were quiet for a few moments.

"You like Hardy better than the other—?" I began.

He grinned with the first embarrassment I had seen him display.

"Don't get me wrong," he said. "I'm not much of a guy for reading. I don't get much of a chance for it. Fact is"—the sheepish grin was visible through the dusk—"I ain't never read much of anybody else. But Hardy—hell, I don't know. He sorta got me."

I was silent, afraid to add to his embarrassment by my comments.

"Guess I even forgot what most of them were all about," he said. "Read 'em so long ago. But I remember about the country, though. The way he writes about it, you sorta never forget

it. Kinda dead and creepy, like a ghost story, maybe, but not exactly." He laughed shortly. "Don't know what there is to make you like it, I mean from the way I tell about it, but hell, I don't know, me, I was always a sucker for it. I guess that's why I liked his books so much, I guess."

It was quite late now, but the paleness of the sky cast a faint light over everything, and the clack-clack of the high-heeled shoes came to us clearly from above. Dowack, however, didn't seem to hear.

"Yes, sir," he said, waving his hand toward the darkness that was the flat countryside and the deeper darkness in the distance that was the low hills, "this is the kind o' country he used to write about, all right. This sure is his meat."

All at once he seemed to become conscious of the noisy pacings above us.

"Guess I better go up and see how Jen's doing," he said, getting up. "Good night."

"Good night," I said.

During the week that followed, we saw a good deal of each other, but I learned no more about him. Save when Mrs. Neipert was arranging some food on a tray for him to take up to her, he did not even refer to his companion, who remained in her room. Then he would say, "That looks good, Mrs. Neipert. Jen'll sure like that, all right." But the tray always came back heaped with lipstick-smeared cigarette butts, the food practically untouched.

And at night, when we sat on the porch, rocking slowly and watching the low hills in the distance grow darker and darker, we could hear the nervous pacing above us. Once or twice, I caught him looking up toward the room where the noises came from, his face a strange mixture of worry and hopeful puzzlement. But as soon as he saw me looking at him, the good-natured smile returned, and he made some appreciative comment about the landscape.

I couldn't help wondering about the strangeness of this

honeymoon. And when I learned from Mr. Neipert—he let it drop with a smirk one night when I met him at the foot of the stairs with two clean kerosene lamps for the honeymooners—that they occupied different rooms, it was all I could do to refrain from asking questions. But the opportunity did not present itself.

As the days went by, Dowack seemed to become more contented. He still appeared alone in the mornings for breakfast and carried a tray upstairs after dinner. But when we sat on the porch at night and listened to the pacing above us, Dowack, when he looked up at all, did so without the frown that I had noticed on previous occasions. Now the look on his face at such times was to me more puzzling than ever. It had become a smile of satisfaction and relief and by the time he had been at the farm for ten days, he was almost jolly.

Then one day, when we were on the porch together, a car stopped on the state highway at the entrance to the dirt road that led to the farmhouse. A man got out, and the car drove away. The man began to walk toward us with quick strides. He was tall and wore a straw hat, but at that distance it was impossible to make out anything more because of the brightness of the late-afternoon sun behind him.

"I wonder who *that* is," I said.

Dowack didn't answer.

"I wonder who that can be," I began again, turning toward him, and stopped. Dowack's face was broken with disappointment. All the pleasure and contentment that had grown up in him during the past ten days was suddenly gone. And as he silently watched the stranger's approach, the disappointment in his face became unmistakably mixed with resignation. When the stranger reached the porch, Dowack even managed to smile a little.

"Hello, Steve," he said pleasantly, if slowly. "I see you made it."

"You bet, Dow," the stranger said, grinning quickly. "It took

a little longer than I expected, but you know me. I never missed yet." He was lean and handsome and wore his clothes well. When he smiled, his thin-skinned, almost gaunt face wrinkled pleasantly and showed his good teeth. "Where's Jen?"

"Upstairs," Dowack said.

"Guess I'll go up, then," the stranger said.

"First floor at the head of the stairs," Dowack said.

The stranger ran up the steps quickly and paused for a moment to pat Dowack's shoulder and say, "Good boy, Dow," before he disappeared into the house.

I looked at Dowack, waiting for an explanation, but he did not speak. He sat quietly, staring into the sinking sun, and chewed his lower lip. Finally, after ten minutes or so, he got up and said, "Well, I guess I'll go up, now."

The dinner hour had come and gone, but Mrs. Neipert had made no move to set the table. Nor did I get up from my chair on the porch. There was a restless quality in the air that insisted upon being undisturbed by the commonplace of eating or moving about.

Suddenly there was the noise of feet coming down the stairs inside the house. The side door opened and closed. Then there was the sound of a motor starting, and a moment later Dowack's car, with the New York license plates, swung around from the side of the farmhouse and sped up the dirt road toward the state highway. I got a clear view of the straw-hatted, handsome stranger at the wheel, and I thought I caught a glimpse of a pale-green jacket and a head of white-blonde hair beside him. But the car was moving too quickly for me to be certain. And in a few moments it was gone.

Dowack came out on the porch and sat down in the rocker beside me. He stared out at the road for a long time, running his tongue around the edges of his dry lips.

"Maybe I'm wrong," I said, "but wasn't that your car I just saw going up the—?"

"No," he said, turning to look at me. "That was Steve's car."

My astonishment must have been plain on my face. He grinned ruefully.

"That's all right," he said. "That was his wife, too."

Heavy, leaden clouds had begun to gather over the valley, giving it an even gloomier appearance than usual.

"I guess I'm just a sap, I suppose," he said, talking to the porch railing. "By this time, when I get *my* age, I shoulda known already it was no soap. But I guess it's just one of those things," he said.

It was plain that he was getting no pleasure out of talking. I was certain that by a phrase or a gesture I could have relieved him of the obligation he seemed to feel he was under to make an explanation. But my virtue was no match for my curiosity. I sat quietly, listening.

"Steve and me and Jen, we sorta grew up together," he said. "Ever since we were kids. I guess I always was a little nuts about her, but with Steve around, she never even gave me a tumble. They been married a long time now, maybe seven-eight years, I guess. Not that Steve's a bad guy or anything like that, but it's just that he moves with a kind of a fast crowd over there in New York."

He paused for a moment, hopefully perhaps, to listen to the low thunder in the distance. But I was relentless in the intensity of my silence.

"They picked him up a couple weeks ago—forgery, they said. He asked me I should take Jen out to the country some place and, well, sorta watch her and take care of her so's nobody'd bother her with questions and all, till he beat the rap and then he'd be out in a few days to pick her up. So I picked this place because I drove through here before and sorta liked the country."

Here the sheepish grin that became him so well returned to his face. But now there was a quality of maturity in it that gave it an air more of sorrow than of boyishness.

"I'm pretty much of a damn fool, I guess," he said. "Maybe worse than that, even. But I was sorta hoping, I mean—yeah," he said grimly, "what's the sense of kidding myself. It's true. I was sorta hoping this time he *wouldn't* beat the rap, and they'd get him, and then maybe, with him out of the way for good—she'd really get to know how I— But the way things work out for me all the time, I guess I shoulda known better."

His voice stopped. And now that his words had turned the tantalizing into the commonplace, my conscience began to take its revenge upon my curiosity. All at once I felt miserable for having practically bludgeoned him into what had changed from an explanation to a confession.

"I'm terribly sorry," I said stupidly. But luckily the rolling thunder gathered into a knot that exploded above us and drowned out my words.

The silence that followed was broken by Dowack. He laughed suddenly. I looked at him.

"You know what I once did when I was a kid?" he said. His voice was surprisingly cheerful, and he laughed again, as though he knew my embarrassment and was trying to help me hide it by changing the subject. "It was way back in 1917, I guess, maybe a year or so earlier or later, but anyway it was way back then, and he was having an anniversary over there in England—he must've been about seventy or older—"

"Who?" I asked in amazement.

"Hardy," he said, and went on: "Well, anyway, I was only a kid then, maybe sixteen, I guess, and he was having this anniversary over there in England, and me, I'd just read every one of his books and all, you know, and I was so hopped up about it—you know what I did?"

"No," I said. "What?"

"I wrote him a letter," he said, "sorta congratulating him on his birthday, you know, and also—not that I'm one of these collectors, or anything like that, but *his*, you know, I thought

I'd like to have it—so I asked him he should send me his autograph."

He stopped and chuckled at the memory.

"What happened?" I asked.

The smile went out of his face, and he shook his head wistfully, with a gesture of acceptance.

"With my luck, I guess I shoulda known," he said slowly. "I never even got no answer."

The thunder above us had settled down to a steady, ominous drumming. We got up and tipped the rockers over and leaned them against the wall of the house. As we went in through the screen door, the rain began to fall.

WILLIAM SAROYAN

Knife-like, Flower-like, Like Nothing at All in the World

»»He'll be around any minute now, Max said. I give you my word. He'll be here.

The little man at the table nodded as Max spoke, and Max said to himself as he wiped the bar, What's he want to see a guy like Pete for?

A good-looking woman came in and ordered a Scotch and soda, and while he was getting the drink Max went on talking to the little man.

It's none of my business, he said, but what do you want to see Pete for?

I beg your pardon? the lady said.

Oh, Max said. Excuse me, lady. I was talking to the little fellow at the table over there. (Little fellow at the table? Max repeated to himself. What the hell kind of talk is that? No class. No ease. Got to study these things out and learn to be nonchalant and stuff like that.)

He's a friend of mine, the lady said.

No, no, Max said quickly. I was talking to that little gentleman over there. (Little gentleman? Why couldn't I leave out the *little* part of it?)

Well, the lady said, even so. He's a friend of mine.

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Who? Max said.

Pete, the lady said.

The little man got up from the table and came over to the bar. He studied the woman carefully, trying at the same time to smile.

What's this? Max thought.

I'm his father, the little man said.

The woman turned and looked down at the little man. It seemed to Max that she didn't think very much of him, or that he, Max, didn't understand anything. (I'm a lousy judge of character, Max decided.)

His father? the woman said.

Yes, the little man said. Peter Morgan.

My name is Ethel Beede, the woman said. The way she said the last name Max knew it had an extra "e" in it somewhere and that, most likely, as he put it, she stank. She didn't exactly stink, but she was probably no good.

Peter Morgan is my son's name, the little man said. My name is Henry.

How do you do, the woman said.

Thank you, the little man said. I came here tonight to see Pete. He hasn't been home in two weeks. Pete's always been dissatisfied, and almost anything at all out of the ordinary throws him off balance.

The woman looked at the little man almost a full minute without speaking.

Max couldn't figure out any of it.

Pete showed up every night sometime between midnight and two, but he was always alone. Tonight his father shows up at a little after ten, and a little after eleven a woman almost old enough to be Pete's mother shows up, too.

Your son, the woman said at last, is a very interesting young man.

I've known him all his life, the little man said quietly. I imagine he's *fascinating* to people who haven't.

I'm quite interested in his ambition, the woman said.

That's very kind of you, the little man said. What ambition is that?

I understand he wants to be an actor, the woman said.

He has a number of ambitions, the little man said. I'm sure you know how old he is.

He said he was twenty-one, the woman said.

He's not quite seventeen, the little man said.

Wait a minute, Max said very loudly. Not quite seventeen? He's been coming in here drinking every night for two weeks now. I can't serve drinks to minors. It's against the law. I thought he was twenty-two or twenty-three.

No, the little man said. He's not quite seventeen. He'll be seventeen August 21. He was born in 1925.

The little man waited a moment for the woman to speak. He hoped the woman would go away and give him a chance to sit down and talk with Pete alone, but the woman didn't seem to want to go.

He's not quite seventeen, the little man said again.

I heard you, the woman said.

Pete is the kind of guy who expects a great deal all the time, the little man said. Have you been giving him money?

The woman was not upset by this question, as Max expected her to be.

Yes, she said. He knows how to spend it.

You're married, the little man said.

I beg your pardon, the woman said.

Well, to put it another way, the little man said, you have children, haven't you?

I have a daughter nineteen years old, the woman said, and another seven years old. Give me another Scotch and soda.

Max made another drink for the lady. The little man wasn't drinking.

Your husband is a wealthy man, Pete's father said.

I am wealthy, the woman said. My husbands have all been —poor.

You want to adopt Pete? the little man said.

I *beg* your pardon, the woman said this time. She was really burned up now. Well, what do you know about that? Max thought. A crazy good-looking punk like Pete—well, for the love of Mike.

I only want to warn you, the little man said, that my son will make you unhappy, no matter what you intend to do. I want you to know that you won't hurt *him*. He's tough. I think he's capable of doing anything. I think he could do something very great or something very strange. I think he could murder almost anybody and not feel guilty. He's very sensitive, too. I'm sure you don't know him as well as I do. I want him to take his time and after a while find out for himself what he wants to do. He's restless and bored and pretty angry deeply. I think he can do anything.

I'm afraid I don't understand, the woman said.

I'm very fond of Pete, the little man said. Maybe it's because he's not like me or his mother or any of his brothers and sisters. We're all very fond of him, but *me* most of all. Pete's ashamed of me. I'll tell you that. At the same time I think he likes me more than he likes any other person in the world. I'm sure you don't intend to marry Pete.

Well, for crying out loud, Max thought. The people you run into in a little bar.

You're about twenty years older than Pete, the little man went on.

I told you I have a nineteen-year-old daughter, the woman said.

Then, I suppose you *do* want to adopt him, the little man said.

We're going to be married day after tomorrow, the woman said.

What the hell is this? Max asked himself. Pete going to marry this high-tone society dame? That crazy kid who looked like a cross between a movie gangster and a ballet dancer? Who walked swiftly and dramatically, as if he were in a play? Who talked loudly and said the funniest things in the world! Who threw money around as if it were buttons? Going to marry this overfed dame?

I see, the little man said quietly.

He looked at the woman a moment.

I see, he said again.

We're very much in love, the woman said. She was deeply hurt. Even Max could tell that. Well, as far as Max was concerned, if she *had* to marry somebody she could pick out somebody her size, somebody like himself.

Oh oh, Max thought suddenly. One of these two ought to get out of here in a hurry. That kid will be coming in here any minute now.

He'll be coming in here any minute now, he said. He wiped the bar as he spoke, so the remark wouldn't be too bald, or whatever it was. Too naked or whatever it was.

Yes, I know, the little man and the woman said at the same time.

We're going to be married, the woman said again.

I've always encouraged Pete to do whatever he's felt like doing, the little man said. I'll pretend I didn't know, and after it's over I'll convince his mother not to interfere, too.

You're very kind, the woman said.

She was irritated and it seemed to Max a little ashamed.

I'm thinking of Pete, the little man said.

He turned and walked out of the place without another word. Max got busy with some glasses at the other end of the bar.

Give me another Scotch and soda, the woman said.

She was sore and ashamed and she looked pretty ugly all of a sudden. At first she had seemed rather beautiful, or at least

striking, but now all of a sudden when Max looked at her she looked awful. I guess a crazy kid like Pete must be wonderful company for a woman like that, Max said. I guess it means a lot to her. Max put her drink down in front of her and went over to the phonograph and put in a nickel.

Max wondered if the kid would be embarrassed about Max knowing about the woman. If Max were seventeen like Pete and the woman was this woman, *he* would be embarrassed if somebody like Max saw her.

When the record ended Max put in another nickel. The kid ought to be in any minute now. He kept looking toward the door and feeling uncomfortable. The woman kept trying not to look toward the door. Max kept putting nickels in the phonograph and looking toward the door.

At two o'clock he said, It's closing time.

The woman paid for nine Scotch and sodas and began to go. Near the door she turned around and came back.

That's right, lady, Max said to himself. I'm not seventeen and I don't walk like a dancer and I'm not the funniest young punk in the world, but I'm not so bad. I'm only forty-eight. Let's talk this thing over. If you've got to marry somebody, marry a guy your size. Marry me.

Max leaned over the bar toward the lady. She opened her handbag. Nuts, Max thought. The woman crumpled a bill in her hand and, shaking Max's hand, she left the bill in it and turned to go. At the door she stopped again and Max said to himself come on, lady. Think this thing over. You're tight and I'm big and—discreet, too. The woman came over to Max again.

We're very much in love with one another, she said. (I'll say we are, Max said. Lady, you've got no idea how much in love with one another we are. Just say the good word.)

Lady, Max said. He felt silly.

The woman moved closer to him, waiting.

Lady, Max said.

Yes? the woman said.

I'm sorry, Max said. This is the first night in two weeks that he's not been in.

It's all right, the woman said.

Can I help you to a cab, Max said.

My car's outside, the lady said.

I'd be glad to drive you home, Max said. I mean—

My chauffeur's in the car, the woman said.

The woman went out before Max had a chance to get around the bar and open the door for her. He went to the door and locked it and while he did so he saw the chauffeur open the door of the car, help the woman in, and then drive away.

Max stood at the door about three minutes, thinking. What's the matter with *me?* he thought. He returned to the bar and put away everything for the night. He put on his coat, and then poured himself a little drink, which he sipped thoughtfully.

The door rattled and he didn't even think of hollering out, Closed.

The door rattled again and then he heard the kid shout, Hey, Max. Let me in a minute.

Max turned toward the door. It would be good to see Pete again, after all this stuff. He went to the door and opened it and the kid came in, the same as on any other night.

Where the hell you been? Max asked.

Max, the kid said. Something's happened. Give me a drink.

Max poured him a drink. Pete swallowed the drink and smiled stupidly. It was a very delightful thing to see.

Max, Pete said, I'm in love.

Yeah, I know, Max said. He was a little burned-up now.

You know? the kid said. I just met her tonight.

Met who? Max said.

Max, I met the most beautiful girl in the world. She's just a kid, but she's wonderful. She's innocent and simple and—well, by God, I'm not ashamed to say it—wonderful.

You said wonderful before, Max said.

She's fourteen years old, Pete said. Where do you think I found her?

Max began to think.

In a movie? he said.

No, Pete said. I went home instead of keeping an appointment. (The kid busted out laughing.) So I decided to stop at the florist's on the corner and take the folks some flowers. I found her in the florist's. She's his daughter. Half Irish, half Italian. Beautiful. Quiet. Lonely. I bought the flowers and took them home and sat around talking, waiting for my father to come home. He'd gone back to the office to do some overtime. So after a while I went back to the florist's and met her father and her mother and asked them if I could take her to the neighborhood movie. After the movie I took her home and I've been walking around town ever since.

I see, Max said. That's swell.

How've things been? Pete said.

Oh so-so, Max said.

Anybody been around? Pete said.

A few people I don't know, Max said.

Any interesting barroom talk? Pete said.

Some, Max said.

I'm going to open a bar myself some day, Pete said. I like to see all kinds of people and hear them talk.

Is that so? Max said.

Yeah, Pete said. The variety, Max. All the different people alive. All the different faces. All the different ways of talking. I like to listen to the way they *laugh*, especially. Do you know how *she* laughs?

No, Max said.

Like an angel, Pete said. It breaks my heart. It makes me sadder than anything in the world. I'm in love with her, but the only trouble is the world's full of them.

That's right, Max said.

That's the only trouble, Pete said. There are so many of them.

There sure are plenty of them, Max said.

They're all over the place, Pete said. Anywhere you go. This one was in the florist's, right in my block. Think of all the other blocks. All the other cities. The hundreds of thousands of them.

Yeah, Max said. He felt old and grateful for a little place of his own and easy working hours and easy work and a place to sleep and an old indifference about the hundreds of thousands of them.

Yeah, he said. That's right, Pete.

Pete swallowed another drink and tossed a dollar on the bar.

On me tonight, Max said.

Thanks, Pete said. He began to go. See you tomor—he began to say. He stopped. I may not be around again for a while, he said. It's about three miles from here to my neighborhood.

O.K., Max said.

So long, Pete said.

Max watched him walk away swiftly, like somebody in a hell of a big play. Max put on his hat and let himself out and locked the door, peeking in to see how it looked without him inside. It looked O.K. He began to walk slowly around the corner.

JAMES THURBER

The Catbird Seat

Mr. Martin bought the pack of Camels on Monday night in the most crowded cigar store on Broadway. It was theatre time and seven or eight men were buying cigarettes. The clerk didn't even glance at Mr. Martin, who put the pack in his overcoat pocket and went out. If any of the staff at F & S had seen him buy the cigarettes, they would have been astonished, for it was generally known that Mr. Martin did not smoke, and never had. No one saw him.

It was just a week to the day since Mr. Martin had decided to rub out Mrs. Ulgine Barrows. The term "rub out" pleased him because it suggested nothing more than the correction of an error—in this case an error of Mr. Fitweiler. Mr. Martin had spent each night of the past week working out his plan and examining it. As he walked home now he went over it again. For the hundredth time he resented the element of imprecision, the margin of guesswork that entered into the business. The project as he had worked it out was casual and bold, the risks were considerable. Something might go wrong anywhere along the line. And therein lay the cunning of his scheme. No one would ever see in it the cautious, painstaking hand of Erwin Martin, head of the filing department at F & S, of whom Mr. Fitweiler had once said, "Man is fallible but Martin isn't."

From *The Thurber Merry-Go-Round* by James Thurber, published by Harper & Brothers. Reprinted by permission of James Thurber.

No one would see his hand, that is, unless it were caught in the act.

Sitting in his apartment, drinking a glass of milk, Mr. Martin reviewed his case against Mrs. Ulgine Barrows, as he had every night for seven nights. He began at the beginning. Her quacking voice and braying laugh had first profaned the halls of F & S on March 7, 1941 (Mr. Martin had a head for dates). Old Roberts, the personnel chief, had introduced her as the newly appointed special adviser to the president of the firm, Mr. Fitweiler. The woman had appalled Mr. Martin instantly, but he hadn't shown it. He had given her his dry hand, a look of studious concentration, and a faint smile. "Well," she had said, looking at the papers on his desk, "are you lifting the oxcart out of the ditch?" As Mr. Martin recalled that moment, over his milk, he squirmed slightly. He must keep his mind on her crimes as a special adviser, not on her peccadillos as a personality. This he found difficult to do, in spite of entering an objection and sustaining it. The faults of the woman as a woman kept chattering on in his mind like an unruly witness. She had, for almost two years now, baited him. In the halls, in the elevator, even in his own office, into which she romped now and then like a circus horse, she was constantly shouting these silly questions at him. "Are you lifting the oxcart out of the ditch? Are you tearing up the pea patch? Are you hollering down the rain barrel? Are you scraping around the bottom of the pickle barrel? Are you sitting in the catbird seat?"

It was Joey Hart, one of Mr. Martin's two assistants, who had explained what the gibberish meant. "She must be a Dodger fan," he had said. "Red Barber announces the Dodger games over the radio and he uses those expressions—picked 'em up down South." Joey had gone on to explain one or two. "Tearing up the pea patch" meant going on a rampage; "sitting in the catbird seat" meant sitting pretty, like a batter with three balls and no strikes on him. Mr. Martin dismissed all this

with an effort. It had been annoying, it had driven him near to distraction, but he was too solid a man to be moved to murder by anything so childish. It was fortunate, he reflected as he passed on to the important charges against Mrs. Barrows, that he had stood up under it so well. He had maintained always an outward appearance of polite tolerance. "Why, I even believe you like the woman," Miss Paird, his other assistant, had once said to him. He had simply smiled.

A gavel rapped in Mr. Martin's mind and the case proper was resumed. Mrs. Ulgine Barrows stood charged with willful, blatant, and persistent attempts to destroy the efficiency and system of F & S. It was competent, material, and relevant to review her advent and rise to power. Mr. Martin had got the story from Miss Paird, who seemed always able to find things out. According to her, Mrs. Barrows had met Mr. Fitweiler at a party, where she had rescued him from the embraces of a powerfully built drunken man who had mistaken the president of F & S for a famous retired Middle Western football coach. She had led him to a sofa and somehow worked upon him a monstrous magic. The aging gentleman had jumped to the conclusion there and then that this was a woman of singular attainments, equipped to bring out the best in him and in the firm. A week later he had introduced her into F & S as his special adviser. On that day confusion got its foot in the door. After Miss Tyson, Mr. Brundage, and Mr. Bartlett had been fired and Mr. Munson had taken his hat and stalked out, mailing in his resignation later, old Roberts had been emboldened to speak to Mr. Fitweiler. He mentioned that Mr. Munson's department had been "a little disrupted" and hadn't they perhaps better resume the old system there? Mr. Fitweiler had said certainly not. He had the greatest faith in Mrs. Barrows' ideas. "They require a little seasoning, a little seasoning, is all," he had added. Mr. Roberts had given it up. Mr. Martin reviewed in detail all the changes wrought by Mrs. Barrows.

She had begun chipping at the cornices of the firm's edifice and now she was swinging at the foundation stones with a pickaxe.

Mr. Martin came now, in his summing up, to the afternoon of Monday, November 2, 1942—just one week ago. On that day, at 3 P. M., Mrs. Barrows had bounced into his office. "Boo!" she had yelled. "Are you scraping around the bottom of the pickle barrel?" Mr. Martin had looked at her from under his green eyeshade, saying nothing. She had begun to wander about the office, taking it in with her great, popping eyes. "Do you really need *all* these filing cabinets?" she had demanded suddenly. Mr. Martin's heart had jumped. "Each of these files," he had said, keeping his voice even, "plays an indispensable part in the system of F & S." She had brayed at him, "Well, don't tear up the pea patch!" and gone to the door. From there she had bawled, "But you sure have got a lot of fine scrap in here!" Mr. Martin could no longer doubt that the finger was on his beloved department. Her pickaxe was on the upswing, poised for the first blow. It had not come yet; he had received no blue memo from the enchanted Mr. Fitweiler bearing nonsensical instructions deriving from the obscene woman. But there was no doubt in Mr. Martin's mind that one would be forthcoming. He must act quickly. Already a precious week had gone by. Mr. Martin stood up in his living room, still holding his milk glass. "Gentlemen of the jury," he said to himself, "I demand the death penalty for this horrible person."

The next day Mr. Martin followed his routine, as usual. He polished his glasses more often and once sharpened an already sharp pencil, but not even Miss Paird noticed. Only once did he catch sight of his victim; she swept past him in the hall with a patronizing "Hi!" At five-thirty he walked home, as usual, and had a glass of milk, as usual. He had never drunk anything stronger in his life—unless you could count ginger ale. The late Sam Schlosser, the S of F & S, had praised Mr. Martin at a

staff meeting several years before for his temperate habits. "Our most efficient worker neither drinks nor smokes," he had said. "The results speak for themselves." Mr. Fitweiler had sat by, nodding approval.

Mr. Martin was still thinking about that red-letter day as he walked over to the Schrafft's on Fifth Avenue near Forty-Sixth Street. He got there, as he always did, at eight o'clock. He finished his dinner and the financial page of the *Sun* at a quarter to nine, as he always did. It was his custom after dinner to take a walk. This time he walked down Fifth Avenue at a casual pace. His gloved hands felt moist and warm, his forehead cold. He transferred the Camels from his overcoat to a jacket pocket. He wondered, as he did so, if they did not represent an unnecessary note of strain. Mrs. Barrows smoked only Luckies. It was his idea to puff a few puffs on a Camel (after the rubbing-out), stub it out in the ashtray holding her lipstick-stained Luckies, and thus drag a small red herring across the trail. Perhaps it was not a good idea. It would take time. He might even choke, too loudly.

Mr. Martin had never seen the house on West Twelfth Street where Mrs. Barrows lived, but he had a clear enough picture of it. Fortunately, she had bragged to everybody about her ducky first-floor apartment in the perfectly darling three-story red-brick. There would be no doorman or other attendants; just the tenants of the second and third floors. As he walked along, Mr. Martin realized that he would get there before nine-thirty. He had considered walking north on Fifth Avenue from Schrafft's to a point from which it would take him until ten o'clock to reach the house. At that hour people were less likely to be coming in or going out. But the procedure would have made an awkward loop in the straight thread of his casualness, and he had abandoned it. It was impossible to figure when people would be entering or leaving the house, anyway There was a great risk at any hour. If he ran into anybody, he would simply have to place the rubbing-out of Ulgine

Barrows in the inactive file forever. The same thing would hold true if there were someone in her apartment. In that case he would just say that he had been passing by, recognized her charming house, and thought to drop in.

It was eighteen minutes after nine when Mr. Martin turned into Twelfth Street. A man passed him, and a man and a woman, talking. There was no one within fifty paces when he came to the house, halfway down the block. He was up the steps and in the small vestibule in no time, pressing the bell under the card that said "Mrs. Ulgine Barrows." When the clicking in the lock started, he jumped forward against the door. He got inside fast, closing the door behind him. A bulb in a lantern hung from the hall ceiling on a chain seemed to give a monstrously bright light. There was nobody on the stair, which went up ahead of him along the left wall. A door opened down the hall in the wall on the right. He went toward it swiftly, on tiptoe.

"Well, for God's sake, look who's here!" bawled Mrs. Barrows, and her braying laugh rang out like the report of a shotgun. He rushed past her like a football tackle, bumping her. "Hey, quit shoving!" she said, closing the door behind them. They were in her living room, which seemed to Mr. Martin to be lighted by a hundred lamps. "What's after you?" she said. "You're as jumpy as a goat." He found he was unable to speak. His heart was wheezing in his throat. "I—yes," he finally brought out. She was jabbering and laughing as she started to help him off with his coat. "No, no," he said. "I'll put it here." He took it off and put it on a chair near the door. "Your hat and gloves, too," she said. "You're in a lady's house." He put his hat on top of the coat. Mrs. Barrows seemed larger than he had thought. He kept his gloves on. "I was passing by," he said. "I recognized—is there anyone here?" She laughed louder than ever. "No," she said, "we're all alone. You're as white as a sheet, you funny man. Whatever *has* come over you? I'll mix you a

toddy." She started toward a door across the room. "Scotch-and-soda be all right? But say, you don't drink, do you?" She turned and gave him her amused look. Mr. Martin pulled himself together. "Scotch-and-soda will be all right," he heard himself say. He could hear her laughing in the kitchen.

Mr. Martin looked quickly around the living room for the weapon. He had counted on finding one there. There were andirons and a poker and something in a corner that looked like an Indian club. None of them would do. It couldn't be that way. He began to pace around. He came to a desk. On it lay a metal paper knife with an ornate handle. Would it be sharp enough? He reached for it and knocked over a small brass jar. Stamps spilled out of it and it fell to the floor with a clatter. "Hey," Mrs. Barrows yelled from the kitchen, "are you tearing up the pea patch?" Mr. Martin gave a strange laugh. Picking up the knife, he tried its point against his left wrist. It was blunt. It wouldn't do.

When Mrs. Barrows reappeared, carrying two highballs, Mr. Martin, standing there with his gloves on, became acutely conscious of the fantasy he had wrought. Cigarettes in his pocket, a drink prepared for him—it was all too grossly improbable. It was more than that; it was impossible. Somewhere in the back of his mind a vague idea stirred, sprouted. "For heaven's sake, take off those gloves," said Mrs. Barrows. "I always wear them in the house," said Mr. Martin. The idea began to bloom, strange and wonderful. She put the glasses on a coffee table in front of a sofa and sat on the sofa. "Come over here, you odd little man," she said. Mr. Martin went over and sat beside her. It was difficult getting a cigarette out of the pack of Camels, but he managed it. She held a match for him, laughing. "Well," she said, handing him his drink, "this is perfectly marvellous. You with a drink and a cigarette."

Mr. Martin puffed, not too awkwardly, and took a gulp of the highball. "I drink and smoke all the time," he said. He

clinked his glass against hers. "Here's nuts to that old windbag, Fitweiler," he said, and gulped again. The stuff tasted awful, but he made no grimace. "Really, Mr. Martin," she said, her voice and posture changing, "you are insulting our employer." Mrs. Barrows was now all special adviser to the president. "I am preparing a bomb," said Mr. Martin, "which will blow the old goat higher than hell." He had only had a little of the drink, which was not strong. It couldn't be that. "Do you take dope or something?" Mrs. Barrows asked coldly. "Heroin," said Mr. Martin. "I'll be coked to the gills when I bump that old buzzard off." "Mr. Martin!" she shouted, getting to her feet. "That will be all of that. You must go at once." Mr. Martin took another swallow of his drink. He tapped his cigarette out in the ashtray and put the pack of Camels on the coffee table. Then he got up. She stood glaring at him. He walked over and put on his hat and coat. "Not a word about this," he said, and laid an index finger against his lips. All Mrs. Barrows could bring out was "Really!" Mr. Martin put his hand on the doorknob. "I'm sitting in the catbird seat," he said. He stuck his tongue out at her and left. Nobody saw him go.

Mr. Martin got to his apartment, walking, well before eleven. No one saw him go in. He had two glasses of milk after brushing his teeth, and he felt elated. It wasn't tipsiness, because he hadn't been tipsy. Anyway, the walk had worn off all effects of the whiskey. He got in bed and read a magazine for a while. He was asleep before midnight.

Mr. Martin got to the office at eight-thirty the next morning, as usual. At a quarter to nine, Ulgine Barrows, who had never before arrived at work before ten, swept into his office. "I'm reporting to Mr. Fitweiler now!" she shouted. "If he turns you over to the police, it's no more than you deserve!" Mr. Martin gave her a look of shocked surprise. "I beg your pardon?" he said. Mrs. Barrows snorted and bounced out of the room, leaving Miss Paird and Joey Hart staring after her. "What's the

matter with that old devil now?" asked Miss Paird. "I have no idea," said Mr. Martin, resuming his work. The other two looked at him and then at each other. Miss Paird got up and went out. She walked slowly past the closed door of Mr. Fitweiler's office. Mrs. Barrows was yelling inside, but she was not braying. Miss Paird could not hear what the woman was saying. She went back to her desk.

Forty-five minutes later, Mrs. Barrows left the president's office and went into her own, shutting the door. It wasn't until half an hour later that Mr. Fitweiler sent for Mr. Martin. The head of the filing department, neat, quiet, attentive, stood in front of the old man's desk. Mr. Fitweiler was pale and nervous. He took his glasses off and twiddled them. He made a small, bruffing sound in his throat. "Martin," he said, "you have been with us more than twenty years." "Twenty-two, sir," said Mr. Martin. "In that time," pursued the president, "your work and your—uh—manner have been exemplary." "I trust so, sir," said Mr. Martin. "I have understood, Martin," said Mr. Fitweiler, "that you have never taken a drink or smoked." "That is correct, sir," said Mr. Martin. "Ah, yes." Mr. Fitweiler polished his glasses. "You may describe what you did after leaving the office yesterday, Martin," he said. Mr. Martin allowed less than a second for his bewildered pause. "Certainly, sir," he said. "I walked home. Then I went to Schrafft's for dinner. Afterward I walked home again. I went to bed early, sir, and read a magazine for a while. I was asleep before eleven." "Ah, yes," said Mr. Fitweiler again. He was silent for a moment, searching for the proper words to say to the head of the filing department. "Mrs. Barrows," he said finally, "Mrs. Barrows has worked hard, Martin, very hard. It grieves me to report that she has suffered a severe breakdown. It has taken the form of a persecution complex accompanied by distressing hallucinations." "I am very sorry, sir," said Mr. Martin. "Mrs. Barrows is under the delusion," continued Mr. Fitweiler, "that you visited her last evening and behaved yourself in an—uh—

unseemly manner." He raised his hand to silence Mr. Martin's little pained outcry. "It is the nature of these psychological diseases," Mr. Fitweiler said, "to fix upon the least likely and most innocent party as the—uh—source of persecution. These matters are not for the lay mind to grasp, Martin. I've just had my psychiatrist, Doctor Fitch, on the phone. He would not, of course, commit himself, but he made enough generalizations to substantiate my suspicions. I suggested to Mrs. Barrows, when she had completed her—uh—story to me this morning, that she visit Doctor Fitch, for I suspected a condition at once. She flew, I regret to say, into a rage, and demanded—uh—requested that I call you on the carpet. You may not know, Martin, but Mrs. Barrows had planned a reorganization of your department—subject to my approval, of course, subject to my approval. This brought you, rather than anyone else, to her mind—but again that is a phenomenon for Doctor Fitch and not for us. So, Martin, I am afraid Mrs. Barrows' usefulness here is at an end." "I am dreadfully sorry, sir," said Mr. Martin.

It was at this point that the door to the office blew open with the suddenness of a gas-main explosion and Mrs. Barrows catapulted through it. "Is the little rat denying it?" she screamed. "He can't get away with that!" Mr. Martin got up and moved discreetly to a point beside Mr. Fitweiler's chair. "You drank and smoked at my apartment," she bawled at Mr. Martin, "and you know it! You called Mr. Fitweiler an old windbag and said you were going to blow him up when you got coked to the gills on your heroin!" She stopped yelling to catch her breath and a new glint came into her popping eyes. "If you weren't such a drab, ordinary little man," she said, "I'd think you'd planned it all. Sticking your tongue out, saying you were sitting in the catbird seat, because you thought no one would believe me when I told it! My God, it's really too perfect!" She brayed loudly and hysterically, and the fury was on her again. She glared at Mr. Fitweiler. "Can't you see how he has tricked us, you old fool? Can't you see his little game?" But Mr. Fit-

weiler had been surreptitiously pressing all the buttons under the top of his desk and employees of F & S began pouring into the room. "Stockton," said Mr. Fitweiler, "you and Fishbein will take Mrs. Barrows to her home. Mrs. Powell, you will go with them." Stockton, who had played a little football in high school, blocked Mrs. Barrows as she made for Mr. Martin. It took him and Fishbein together to force her out of the door into the hall, crowded with stenographers and office boys. She was still screaming imprecations at Mr. Martin, tangled and contradictory imprecations. The hubbub finally died out down the corridor.

"I regret that this has happened," said Mr. Fitweiler. "I shall ask you to dismiss it from your mind, Martin." "Yes, sir," said Mr. Martin, anticipating his chief's "That will be all" by moving to the door. "I will dismiss it." He went out and shut the door, and his step was light and quick in the hall. When he entered his department he had slowed down to his customary gait, and he walked quietly across the room to the W20 file, wearing a look of studious concentration.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Babylon Revisited

I

"And where's Mr. Campbell?" Charlie asked.

"Gone to Switzerland. Mr. Campbell's a pretty sick man, Mr. Wales."

"I'm sorry to hear that. And George Hardt?" Charlie inquired.

"Back in America, gone to work."

"And where is the Snow Bird?"

"He was in here last week. Anyway, his friend, Mr. Schaeffer, is in Paris."

Two familiar names from the long list of a year and a half ago. Charlie scribbled an address in his notebook and tore out the page.

"If you see Mr. Schaeffer, give him this," he said. "It's my brother-in-law's address. I haven't settled on a hotel yet."

He was not really disappointed to find Paris was so empty. But the stillness in the Ritz bar was strange and portentous. It was not an American bar any more—he felt polite in it, and not as if he owned it. It had gone back into France. He felt the stillness from the moment he got out of the taxi and saw the doorman, usually in a frenzy of activity at this hour, gossiping with a *chasseur* by the servants' entrance.

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Passing through the corridor, he heard only a single, bored voice in the once-clamorous women's room. When he turned into the bar he travelled the twenty feet of green carpet with his eyes fixed straight ahead by old habit; and then, with his foot firmly on the rail, he turned and surveyed the room, encountering only a single pair of eyes that fluttered up from a newspaper in the corner. Charlie asked for the head barman, Paul, who in the latter days of the bull market had come to work in his own custom-built car—disembarking, however, with due nicety at the nearest corner. But Paul was at his country house today and Alix giving him information.

"No, no more," Charlie said, "I'm going slow these days."

Alix congratulated him: "You were going pretty strong a couple of years ago."

"I'll stick to it all right," Charlie assured him. "I've stuck to it for over a year and a half now."

"How do you find conditions in America?"

"I haven't been to America for months. I'm in business in Prague, representing a couple of concerns there. They don't know about me down there."

Alix smiled.

"Remember the night of George Hardt's bachelor dinner here?" said Charlie. "By the way, what's become of Claude Fessenden?"

Alix lowered his voice confidentially: "He's in Paris, but he doesn't come here any more. Paul doesn't allow it. He ran up a bill of thirty thousand francs, charging all his drinks and his lunches, and usually his dinner, for more than a year. And when Paul finally told him he had to pay, he gave him a bad check."

Alix shook his head sadly.

"I don't understand it, such a dandy fellow. Now he's all bloated up—" He made a plump apple of his hands.

Charlie watched a group of strident queens installing themselves in a corner.

"Nothing affects them," he thought. "Stocks rise and fall, people loaf or work, but they go on forever." The place oppressed him. He called for the dice and shook with Alix for the drink.

"Here for long, Mr. Wales?"

"I'm here for four or five days to see my little girl."

"Oh-h! You have a little girl?"

Outside, the fire-red, gas-blue, ghost-green signs shone smokily through the tranquil rain. It was late afternoon and the streets were in movement; the *bistros* gleamed. At the corner of the Boulevard des Capucines he took a taxi. The Place de la Concorde moved by in pink majesty; they crossed the logical Seine, and Charlie felt the sudden provincial quality of the left bank.

Charlie directed his taxi to the Avenue de l'Opera, which was out of his way. But he wanted to see the blue hour spread over the magnificent façade, and imagine that the cab horns, playing endlessly the first few bars of *Le Plus que Lent*, were the trumpets of the Second Empire. They were closing the iron grill in front of Brentano's Book-store, and people were already at dinner behind the trim little bourgeois hedge of Duval's. He had never eaten at a really cheap restaurant in Paris. Five-course dinner, four francs fifty, eighteen cents, wine included. For some odd reason he wished that he had.

As they rolled on to the Left Bank and he felt its sudden provincialism, he thought, "I spoiled this city for myself. I didn't realize it, but the days came along one after another, and then two years were gone, and everything was gone, and I was gone."

He was thirty-five, and good to look at. The Irish mobility of his face was sobered by a deep wrinkle between his eyes. As he rang his brother-in-law's bell in the Rue Palatine, the wrinkle deepened till it pulled down his brows; he felt a cramping sensation in his belly. From behind the maid who opened the door darted a lovely little girl of nine who shrieked

"Daddy!" and flew up, struggling like a fish, into his arms. She pulled his head around by one ear and set her cheek against his.

"My old pie," he said.

"Oh, daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy, dads, dads, dads!"

She drew him into the salon, where the family waited, a boy and girl his daughter's age, his sister-in-law and her husband. He greeted Marion with his voice pitched carefully to avoid either feigned enthusiasm or dislike, but her response was more frankly tepid, though she minimized her expression of unalterable distrust by directing her regard toward his child. The two men clasped hands in a friendly way and Lincoln Peters rested his for a moment on Charlie's shoulder.

The room was warm and comfortably American. The three children moved intimately about, playing through the yellow oblongs that led to other rooms; the cheer of six o'clock spoke in the eager smacks of the fire and the sounds of French activity in the kitchen. But Charlie did not relax; his heart sat up rigidly in his body and he drew confidence from his daughter, who from time to time came close to him, holding in her arms the doll he had brought.

"Really extremely well," he declared in answer to Lincoln's question. "There's a lot of business there that isn't moving at all, but we're doing even better than ever. In fact, damn well. I'm bringing my sister over from America next month to keep house for me. My income last year was bigger than it was when I had money. You see, the Czechs—"

His boasting was for a specific purpose; but after a moment, seeing a faint restiveness in Lincoln's eye, he changed the subject:

"Those are fine children of yours, well brought up, good manners."

"We think Honoria's a great little girl too."

Marion Peters came back from the kitchen. She was a tall woman with worried eyes, who had once possessed a fresh

American loveliness. Charlie had never been sensitive to it and was always surprised when people spoke of how pretty she had been. From the first there had been an instinctive antipathy between them.

"Well, how do you find Honoria?" she asked.

"Wonderful. I was astonished how much she's grown in ten months. All the children are looking well."

"We haven't had a doctor for a year. How do you like being back in Paris?"

"It seems very funny to see so few Americans around."

"I'm delighted," Marion said vehemently. "Now at least you can go into a store without their assuming you're a millionaire. We've suffered like everybody, but on the whole it's a good deal pleasanter."

"But it was nice while it lasted," Charlie said. "We were a sort of royalty, almost infallible, with a sort of magic around us. In the bar this afternoon"—he stumbled, seeing his mistake—"there wasn't a man I knew."

She looked at him keenly. "I should think you'd have had enough of bars."

"I only stayed a minute. I take one drink every afternoon, and no more."

"Don't you want a cocktail before dinner?" Lincoln asked.

"I take only one drink every afternoon, and I've had that."

"I hope you keep to it," said Marion.

Her dislike was evident in the coldness with which she spoke, but Charlie only smiled; he had larger plans. Her very aggressiveness gave him an advantage, and he knew enough to wait. He wanted them to initiate the discussion of what they knew had brought him to Paris.

At dinner he couldn't decide whether Honoria was most like him or her mother. Fortunate if she didn't combine the traits of both that had brought them to disaster. A great wave of protectiveness went over him. He thought he knew what

to do for her. He believed in character; he wanted to jump back a whole generation and trust in character again as the eternally valuable element. Everything wore out.

He left soon after dinner, but not to go home. He was curious to see Paris by night with clearer and more judicious eyes than those of other days. He bought a *strapontin* for the Casino and watched Josephine Baker go through her chocolate arabesques.

After an hour he left and strolled toward Montmartre, up the Rue Pigalle into the Place Blanche. The rain had stopped and there were a few people in evening clothes disembarking from taxis in front of cabarets, and *cocottes* prowling singly or in pairs, and many Negroes. He passed a lighted door from which issued music, and stopped with the sense of familiarity; it was Bricktop's, where he had parted with so many hours and so much money. A few doors farther on he found another ancient rendezvous and incautiously put his head inside. Immediately an eager orchestra burst into sound, a pair of professional dancers leaped to their feet and a maître d'hôtel swooped toward him, crying, "Crowd just arriving, sir!" But he withdrew quickly.

"You have to be damn drunk," he thought.

Zelli's was closed, the bleak and sinister cheap hotels surrounding it were dark; up in the Rue Blanche there was more light and a local, colloquial French crowd. The Poet's Cave had disappeared, but the two great mouths of the Café of Heaven and the Café of Hell still yawned—even devoured, as he watched, the meagre contents of a tourist bus—a German, a Japanese, and an American couple who glanced at him with frightened eyes.

So much for the effort and ingenuity of Montmartre. All the catering to vice and waste was on an utterly childish scale, and he suddenly realized the meaning of the word "dissipate" —to dissipate into thin air; to make nothing out of something.

In the little hours of the night every move from place to place was an enormous human jump, an increase of paying for the privilege of slower and slower motion.

He remembered thousand-franc notes given to an orchestra for playing a single number, hundred-franc notes tossed to a doorman for calling a cab.

But it hadn't been given for nothing.

It had been given, even the most wildly squandered sum, as an offering to destiny that he might not remember the things most worth remembering, the things that now he would always remember—his child taken from his control, his wife escaped to a grave in Vermont.

In the glare of a *brasserie* a woman spoke to him. He bought her some eggs and coffee, and then, eluding her encouraging stare, gave her a twenty-franc note and took a taxi to his hotel.

II

He woke upon a fine fall day—football weather. The depression of yesterday was gone and he liked the people on the streets. At noon he sat opposite Honoria at Le Grand Vatel, the only restaurant he could think of not reminiscent of champagne dinners and long luncheons that began at two and ended in a blurred and vague twilight.

"Now, how about vegetables? Oughtn't you to have some vegetables?"

"Well, yes."

"Here's *épinards* and *chou-fleur* and carrots and *haricots*."

"I'd like *chou-fleur*."

"Wouldn't you like to have two vegetables?"

"I usually only have one at lunch."

The waiter was pretending to be inordinately fond of children. "*Qu'elle est mignonne la petite? Ella parle exactement comme une française.*"

"How about dessert? Shall we wait and see?"

The waiter disappeared. Honoria looked at her father expectantly.

"What are we going to do?"

"First, we're going to that toy store in the Rue Saint-Honoré and buy you anything you like. And then we're going to the vaudeville at the Empire."

She hesitated. "I like it about the vaudeville, but not the toy store."

"Why not?"

"Well, you brought me this doll." She had it with her. "And I've got lots of things. And we're not rich any more, are we?"

"We never were. But today you are to have anything you want."

"All right," she agreed resignedly.

When there had been her mother and a French nurse he had been inclined to be strict; now he extended himself, reached out for a new tolerance; he must be both parents to her and not shut any of her out of communication.

"I want to get to know you," he said gravely. "First let me introduce myself. My name is Charles J. Wales, of Prague."

"Oh, daddy!" her voice cracked with laughter.

"And who are you, please?" he persisted, and she accepted a rôle immediately: "Honoria Wales, Rue Palatine, Paris."

"Married or single?"

"No, not married. Single."

He indicated the doll. "But I see you have a child, madame."

Unwilling to disinherit it, she took it to her heart and thought quickly: "Yes, I've been married, but I'm not married now. My husband is dead."

He went on quickly, "And the child's name?"

"Simone. That's after my best friend at school."

"I'm very pleased that you're doing so well at school."

"I'm third this month," she boasted. "Elsie"—that was her cousin—"is only about eighteen, and Richard is about at the bottom."

"You like Richard and Elsie, don't you?"

"Oh, yes. I like Richard quite well and I like her all right."

Cautiously and casually he asked: "And Aunt Marion and Uncle Lincoln—which do you like best?"

"Oh, Uncle Lincoln, I guess."

He was increasingly aware of her presence. As they came in, a murmur of ". . . adorable" followed them, and now the people at the next table bent all their silences upon her, staring as if she were something no more conscious than a flower.

"Why don't I live with you?" she asked suddenly. "Because mamma's dead?"

"You must stay here and learn more French. It would have been hard for daddy to take care of you so well."

"I don't really need much taking care of any more. I do everything for myself."

Going out of the restaurant a man and a woman unexpectedly hailed him!

"Well, the old Wales!"

"Hello there, Lorraine. . . . Dunc."

Sudden ghosts out of the past: Duncan Schaeffer, a friend from college. Lorraine Quarrles, a lovely, pale blonde of thirty; one of a crowd who had helped them make months into days in the lavish times of three years ago.

"My husband couldn't come this year," she said, in answer to his question. "We're poor as hell. So he gave me two hundred a month and told me I could do my worst on that. . . . This your little girl?"

"What about coming back and sitting down?" Duncan asked.

"Can't do it." He was glad for an excuse. As always he felt Lorraine's passionate, provocative attraction, but his own rhythm was different now.

"Well, how about dinner?" she asked.

"I'm not free. Give me your address and let me call you."

"Charlie, I believe you're sober," she said judicially. "I hon-

estly believe he's sober, Dunc. Pinch him and see if he's sober."

Charlie indicated Honoria with his head. They both laughed.

"What's your address?" said Duncan sceptically.

He hesitated, unwilling to give the name of his hotel.

"I'm not settled yet. I'd better call you. We're going to see the vaudeville at the Empire."

"There! That's what I want to do," Lorraine said. "I want to see some clowns and acrobats and jugglers. That's just what we'll do, Dunc."

"We've got to do an errand first," said Charlie. "Perhaps we'll see you there."

"All right, you snob. . . . Good-bye, beautiful little girl."

"Good-bye."

Honoria bobbed politely.

Somehow, an unwelcome encounter. They liked him because he was functioning, because he was serious; they wanted to see him, because he was stronger than they were now, because they wanted to draw a certain sustenance from his strength.

At the Empire, Honoria proudly refused to sit upon her father's folded coat. She was already an individual with a code of her own, and Charlie was more and more absorbed by the desire of putting a little of himself into her before she crystallized utterly. It was hopeless to try to know her in so short a time.

Between the acts they came upon Duncan and Lorraine in the lobby where the band was playing.

"Have a drink?"

"All right, but not up at the bar. We'll take a table."

"The perfect father."

Listening abstractedly to Lorraine, Charlie watched Honoria's eyes leave their table, and he followed them wistfully about the room, wondering what they saw. He met her glance and she smiled.

"I liked that lemonade," she said.

What had she said? What had he expected? Going home in a taxi afterward, he pulled her over until her head rested against his chest.

"Darling, do you ever think about your mother?"

"Yes, sometimes," she answered vaguely.

"I don't want you to forget her. Have you got a picture of her?"

"Yes, I think so. Anyhow, Aunt Marion has. Why don't you want me to forget her?"

"She loved you very much."

"I loved her too."

They were silent for a moment.

"Daddy, I want to come and live with you," she said suddenly.

His heart leaped; he had wanted it to come like this.

"Aren't you perfectly happy?"

"Yes, but I love you better than anybody. And you love me better than anybody, don't you, now that mummy's dead?"

"Of course I do. But you won't always like me best, honey. You'll grow up and meet somebody your own age and go marry him and forget you ever had a daddy."

"Yes, that's true," she agreed tranquilly.

He didn't go in. He was coming back at nine o'clock and he wanted to keep himself fresh and new for the thing he must say then.

"When you're safe inside, just show yourself in that window."

"All right. Good-bye, dads, dads, dads, dads."

He waited in the dark street until she appeared, all warm and glowing, in the window above and kissed her fingers out into the night.

III

They were waiting. Marion sat behind the coffee service in a dignified black dinner dress that just faintly suggested mourning. Lincoln was walking up and down with the animation of one who had already been talking. They were as anxious as he was to get into the question. He opened it almost immediately:

"I suppose you know what I want to see you about—why I really came to Paris."

Marion played with the black stars on her necklace and frowned.

"I'm awfully anxious to have a home," he continued. "And I'm awfully anxious to have Honoria in it. I appreciate your taking in Honoria for her mother's sake, but things have changed now"—he hesitated and then continued more forcibly—"changed radically with me, and I want to ask you to reconsider the matter. It would be silly for me to deny that about three years ago I was acting badly—"

Marion looked up at him with hard eyes.

"—but all that's over. As I told you, I haven't had more than a drink a day for over a year, and I take that drink deliberately, so that the idea of alcohol won't get too big in my imagination. You see the idea?"

"No," said Marion succinctly.

"It's a sort of stunt I set myself. It keeps the matter in proportion."

"I get you," said Lincoln. "You don't want to admit it's got any attraction for you."

"Something like that. Sometimes I forget and don't take it. But I try to take it. Anyhow, I couldn't afford to drink in my position. The people I represent are more than satisfied with what I've done, and I'm bringing my sister over from Burlington to keep house for me, and I want awfully to have Honoria too. You know that even when her mother and I weren't get-

ting along well we never let anything that happened touch Honoria. I know she's fond of me and I know I'm able to take care of her and—well, there you are. How do you feel about it?"

He knew that now he would have to take a beating. It would last an hour or two hours, and it would be difficult, but if he modulated his inevitable resentment to the chastened attitude of the reformed sinner, he might win his point in the end.

Keep your temper, he told himself. You don't want to be justified. You want Honoria.

Lincoln spoke first: "We've been talking it over ever since we got your letter last month. We're happy to have Honoria here. She's a dear little thing, and we're glad to be able to help her, but of course that isn't the question—"

Marion interrupted suddenly. "How long are you going to stay sober, Charlie?" she asked.

"Permanently, I hope."

"How can anybody count on that?"

"You know I never did drink heavily until I gave up business and came over here with nothing to do. Then Helen and I began to run around with—"

"Please leave Helen out of it. I can't bear to hear you talk about her like that."

He stared at her grimly; he had never been certain how fond of each other the sisters were in life.

"My drinking only lasted about a year and a half—from the time we came over until I—collapsed."

"It was time enough."

"It was time enough," he agreed.

"My duty is entirely to Helen," she said. "I try to think what she would have wanted me to do. Frankly, from the night you did that terrible thing you haven't really existed for me. I can't help that. She was my sister."

"Yes."

"When she was dying she asked me to look out for Honoria.

If you hadn't been in a sanitarium then, it might have helped matters."

He had no answer.

"I'll never in my life be able to forget the morning when Helen knocked at my door, soaked to the skin and shivering, and said you'd locked her out."

Charlie gripped the sides of the chair. This was more difficult than he expected; he wanted to launch out into a long expostulation and explanation, but he only said: "The night I locked her out—" and she interrupted, "I don't feel up to going over that again."

After a moment's silence Lincoln said: "We're getting off the subject. You want Marion to set aside her legal guardianship and give you Honoria. I think the main point for her is whether she has confidence in you or not."

"I don't blame Marion," Charlie said slowly, "but I think she can have entire confidence in me. I had a good record up to three years ago. Of course, it's within human possibilities I might go wrong any time. But if we wait much longer I'll lose Honoria's childhood and my chance for a home." He shook his head, "I'll simply lose her, don't you see?"

"Yes, I see," said Lincoln.

"Why didn't you think of all this before?" Marion asked.

"I suppose I did, from time to time, but Helen and I were getting along badly. When I consented to the guardianship, I was flat on my back in a sanitarium and the market had cleaned me out. I knew I'd acted badly, and I thought if it would bring any peace to Helen, I'd agree to anything. But now it's different. I'm functioning, I'm behaving damn well, so far as—"

"Please don't swear at me," Marion said.

He looked at her, startled. With each remark the force of her dislike became more and more apparent. She had built up all her fear of life into one wall and faced it toward him. This trivial reproof was possibly the result of some trouble with the

cook several hours before. Charlie became increasingly alarmed at leaving Honoria in this atmosphere of hostility against himself; sooner or later it would come out, in a word here, a shake of the head there, and some of that distrust would be irrevocably implanted in Honoria. But he pulled his temper down out of his face and shut it up inside him; he had won a point, for Lincoln realized the absurdity of Marion's remark and asked her lightly since when she had objected to the word "damn."

"Another thing," Charlie said: "I'm able to give her certain advantages now. I'm going to take a French governess to Prague with me. I've got a lease on a new apartment—"

He stopped, realizing that he was blundering. They couldn't be expected to accept with equanimity the fact that his income was again twice as large as their own.

"I suppose you can give her more luxuries than we can," said Marion. "When you were throwing away money we were living along watching every ten francs. . . . I suppose you'll start doing it again."

"Oh, no," he said. "I've learned. I worked hard for ten years, you know—until I got lucky in the market, like so many people. Terribly lucky. It didn't seem any use working any more, so I quit. It won't happen again."

There was a long silence. All of them felt their nerves straining, and for the first time in a year Charlie wanted a drink. He was sure now that Lincoln Peters wanted him to have his child.

Marion shuddered suddenly; part of her saw that Charlie's feet were planted on the earth now, and her own maternal feeling recognized the naturalness of his desire; but she had lived for a long time with a prejudice—a prejudice founded on a curious disbelief in her sister's happiness, and which, in the shock of one terrible night, had turned to hatred for him. It had all happened at a point in her life where the discouragement of ill health and adverse circumstances made it neces-

sary for her to believe in tangible villainy and a tangible villain.

"I can't help what I think!" she cried out suddenly. "How much you were responsible for Helen's death, I don't know. It's something you'll have to square with your own conscience."

An electric current of agony surged through him; for a moment he was almost on his feet, an unuttered sound echoing in his throat. He hung on to himself for a moment, another moment.

"Hold on there," said Lincoln uncomfortably. "I never thought you were responsible for that."

"Helen died of heart trouble," Charlie said dully.

"Yes, heart trouble." Marion spoke as if the phrase had another meaning for her.

Then, in the flatness that followed her outburst, she saw him plainly and she knew he had somehow arrived at control over the situation. Glancing at her husband, she found no help from him, and as abruptly as if it were a matter of no importance, she threw up the sponge.

"Do what you like!" she cried, springing up from her chair. "She's your child. I'm not the person to stand in your way. I think if it were my child I'd rather see her—" She managed to check herself. "You two decide it. I can't stand this. I'm sick. I'm going to bed."

She hurried from the room; after a moment Lincoln said:

"This has been a hard day for her. You know how strongly she feels—" His voice was almost apologetic: "When a woman gets an idea in her head."

"Of course."

"It's going to be all right. I think she sees now that you—can provide for the child, and so we can't very well stand in your way or Honoria's way."

"Thank you, Lincoln."

"I'd better go along and see how she is."

"I'm going."

He was still trembling when he reached the street, but a walk down the Rue Bonaparte to the quais set him up, and as he crossed the Seine, fresh and new by the quai lamps, he felt exultant. But back in his room he couldn't sleep. The image of Helen haunted him. Helen whom he had loved so until they had senselessly begun to abuse each other's love, tear it into shreds. On that terrible February night that Marion remembered so vividly, a slow quarrel had gone on for hours. There was a scene at the Florida, and then he attempted to take her home, and then she kissed young Webb at a table; after that there was what she had hysterically said. When he arrived home alone he turned the key in the lock in wild anger. How could he know she would arrive an hour later alone, that there would be a snowstorm in which she wandered about in slippers, too confused to find a taxi? Then the aftermath, her escaping pneumonia by a miracle, and all the attendant horror. They were "reconciled," but that was the beginning of the end, and Marion, who had seen with her own eyes and who imagined it to be one of many scenes from her sister's martyrdom, never forgot.

Going over it again brought Helen nearer, and in the white, soft light that steals upon half sleep near morning he found himself talking to her again. She said that he was perfectly right about Honoria and that she wanted Honoria to be with him. She said she was glad he was being good and doing better. She said a lot of other things—very friendly things—but she was in a swing in a white dress, and swinging faster and faster all the time, so that at the end he could not hear clearly all that she said.

IV

He woke up feeling happy. The door of the world was open again. He made plans, vistas, futures for Honoria and himself,

but suddenly he grew sad, remembering all the plans he and Helen had made. She had not planned to die. The present was the thing—work to do and someone to love. But not to love too much, for he knew the injury that a father can do to a daughter or a mother to a son by attaching them too closely: afterward, out in the world, the child would seek in the marriage partner the same blind tenderness and, failing probably to find it, turn against love and life.

It was another bright, crisp day. He called Lincoln Peters at the bank where he worked and asked if he could count on taking Honoria when he left for Prague. Lincoln agreed that there was no reason for delay. One thing—the legal guardianship. Marion wanted to retain that a while longer. She was upset by the whole matter, and it would oil things if she felt that the situation was still in her control for another year. Charlie agreed, wanting only the tangible, visible child.

Then the question of a governess. Charlie sat in a gloomy agency and talked to cross Bernaise and to a buxom Breton peasant, neither of whom he could have endured. There were others whom he would see tomorrow.

He lunched with Lincoln Peters at Griffons, trying to keep down his exultation.

"There's nothing quite like your own child," Lincoln said. "But you understand how Marion feels too."

"She's forgotten how hard I worked for seven years there," Charlie said. "She just remembers one night."

"There's another thing." Lincoln hesitated. "While you and Helen were tearing around Europe throwing money away, we were just getting along. I didn't touch any of the prosperity because I never got ahead enough to carry anything but my insurance. I think Marion felt there was some kind of injustice in it—you not even working toward the end, and getting richer and richer."

"It went just as quick as it came," said Charlie.

"Yes, a lot of it stayed in the hands of *chasseurs* and saxo-

phone players and maîtres d'hôtel—well, the big party's over now. I just said that to explain Marion's feeling about those crazy years. If you drop in about six o'clock tonight before Marion's too tired, we'll settle the details on the spot."

Back at his hotel, Charlie found a *pneumatique* that had been redirected from the Ritz bar where Charlie had left his address for the purpose of finding a certain man.

DEAR CHARLIE: You were so strange when we saw you the other day that I wondered if I did something to offend you. If so, I'm not conscious of it. In fact, I have thought about you too much for the last year, and it's always been in the back of my mind that I might see you if I came over here. We *did* have such good times that crazy spring, like the night you and I stole the butcher's tricycle, and the time we tried to call on the president and you had the old derby rim and the wire cane. Everybody seems so old lately, but I don't feel old a bit. Couldn't we get together some time today for old time's sake? I've got a vile hangover for the moment, but will be feeling better this afternoon and will look for you about five in the sweet-shop at the Ritz.

Always devotedly

LORRAINE

His first feeling was one of awe that he had actually, in his mature years, stolen a tricycle and pedalled Lorraine all over the Étoile between the small hours and dawn. In retrospect it was a nightmare. Locking out Helen didn't fit in with any other act of his life, but the tricycle incident did—it was one of many. How many weeks or months of dissipation to arrive at that condition of utter irresponsibility?

He tried to picture how Lorraine had appeared to him then —very attractive; Helen was unhappy about it, though she said nothing. Yesterday, in the restaurant, Lorraine had seemed trite, blurred, worn away. He emphatically did not want to see her, and he was glad Alix had not given away his

hotel address. It was a relief to think, instead, of Honoria, to think of Sundays spent with her and of saying good morning to her and of knowing she was there in his house at night, drawing her breath in the darkness.

At five he took a taxi and bought presents for all the Peters —a piquant cloth doll, a box of Roman soldiers, flowers for Marion, big linen handkerchiefs for Lincoln.

He saw, when he arrived in the apartment, that Marion had accepted the inevitable. She greeted him now as though he were a recalcitrant member of the family, rather than a menacing outsider. Honoria had been told she was going; Charlie was glad to see that her tact made her conceal her excessive happiness. Only on his lap did she whisper her delight and the question "When?" before she slipped away with the other children.

He and Marion were alone for a minute in the room, and on an impulse he spoke out boldly:

"Family quarrels are bitter things. They don't go according to any rules. They're not like aches or wounds; they're more like splits in the skin that won't heal because there's not enough material. I wish you and I could be on better terms."

"Some things are hard to forget," she answered. "It's a question of confidence." There was no answer to this and presently she asked, "When do you propose to take her?"

"As soon as I can get a governess. I hoped the day after tomorrow."

"That's impossible. I've got to get her things in shape. Not before Saturday."

He yielded. Coming back into the room, Lincoln offered him a drink.

"I'll take my daily whisky," he said.

It was warm here, it was a home, people together by a fire. The children felt very safe and important; the mother and father were serious, watchful. They had things to do for the children more important than his visit here. A spoonful of

medicine was, after all, more important than the strained relations between Marion and himself. They were not dull people, but they were very much in the grip of life and circumstances. He wondered if he couldn't do something to get Lincoln out of his rut at the bank.

A long peal at the door-bell; the *bonne de toute faire* passed through and went down the corridor. The door opened upon another long ring, and then voices, and the three in the salon looked up expectantly; Richard moved to bring the corridor within his range of vision, and Marion rose. Then the maid came back along the corridor, closely followed by the voices, which developed under the light into Duncan Schaeffer and Lorraine Quarrles.

They were gay, they were hilarious, they were roaring with laughter. For a moment Charlie was astounded; unable to understand how they ferreted out the Peters' address.

"Ah-h-h!" Duncan wagged his finger roguishly at Charlie. "Ah-h-h!"

They both slid down another cascade of laughter. Anxious and at a loss, Charlie shook hands with them quickly and presented them to Lincoln and Marion. Marion nodded, scarcely speaking. She had drawn back a step toward the fire; her little girl stood beside her, and Marion put an arm about her shoulder.

With growing annoyance at the intrusion, Charlie waited for them to explain themselves. After some concentration Duncan said:

"We came to invite you out to dinner. Lorraine and I insist that all this shishi, cagy business 'bout your address got to stop."

Charlie came closer to them, as if to force them backward down the corridor.

"Sorry, but I can't. Tell me where you'll be and I'll phone you in half an hour."

This made no impression. Lorraine sat down suddenly on

the side of a chair, and focussing her eyes on Richard, cried, "Oh, what a nice little boy! Come here, little boy." Richard glanced at his mother, but did not move. With a perceptible shrug of her shoulders, Lorraine turned back to Charlie:

"Come and dine. Sure your cousins won' mine. See you so sel'om. Or solemn."

"I can't," said Charlie sharply. "You two have dinner and I'll phone you."

Her voice became suddenly unpleasant. "All right, we'll go. But I remember once when you hammered on my door at four A. M. I was enough of a good sport to give you a drink. Come on, Dunc."

Still in slow motion, with blurred, angry faces, with uncertain feet, they retired along the corridor.

"Good night," Charlie said.

"Good night!" responded Lorraine emphatically.

When he went back into the salon Marion had not moved, only now her son was standing in the circle of her other arm. Lincoln was still swinging Honoria back and forth like a pendulum from side to side.

"What an outrage!" Charlie broke out. "What an absolute outrage!"

Neither of them answered. Charlie dropped into an armchair, picked up his drink, set it down again and said:

"People I haven't seen for two years having the colossal nerve—"

He broke off. Marion had made the sound "Oh!" in one swift, furious breath, turned her body from him with a jerk and left the room.

Lincoln set down Honoria carefully.

"You children go in and start your soup," he said, and when they obeyed, he said to Charlie:

"Marion's not well and she can't stand shocks. That kind of people make her really physically sick."

"I didn't tell them to come here. They wormed your name out of somebody. They deliberately—"

"Well, it's too bad. It doesn't help matters. Excuse me a minute."

Left alone, Charlie sat tense in his chair. In the next room he could hear the children eating, talking in monosyllables, already oblivious to the scene between their elders. He heard a murmur of conversation from a farther room and then the ticking bell of a telephone receiver picked up, and in a panic he moved to the other side of the room and out of earshot.

In a minute Lincoln came back. "Look here, Charlie. I think we'd better call off dinner for tonight. Marion's in bad shape."

"Is she angry with me?"

"Sort of," he said, almost roughly. "She's not strong and—"

"You mean she's changed her mind about Honoria?"

"She's pretty bitter right now. I don't know. You phone me at the bank tomorrow."

"I wish you'd explain to her I never dreamed these people would come here. I'm just as sore as you are."

"I couldn't explain anything to her now."

Charlie got up. He took his coat and hat and started down the corridor. Then he opened the door of the dining room and said in a strange voice, "Good night, children."

Honoria rose and ran around the table to hug him.

"Good night, sweetheart," he said vaguely, and then trying to make his voice more tender, trying to conciliate something, "Good night, dear children."

V

Charlie went directly to the Ritz bar with the furious idea of finding Lorraine and Duncan, but they were not there, and he realized that in any case there was nothing he could do. He had not touched his drink at the Peters', and now he ordered a whisky-and-soda. Paul came over to say hello.

"It's a great change," he said sadly. "We do about half the business we did. So many fellows I hear about back in the States lost everything, maybe not in the first crash, but then in the second. Your friend George Hardt lost every cent, I hear. Are you back in the States?"

"No, I'm in business in Prague."

"I heard that you lost a lot in the crash."

"I did," and he added grimly, "but I lost everything I wanted in the boom."

"Selling short."

"Something like that."

Again the memory of those days swept over him like a nightmare—the people they had met travelling; then people who couldn't add a row of figures or speak a coherent sentence. The little man Helen had consented to dance with at the ship's party, who had insulted her ten feet from the table; the women and girls carried screaming with drink or drugs out of public places—

—The men who locked their wives out in the snow, because the snow of twenty-nine wasn't real snow. If you didn't want it to be snow, you just paid some money.

He went to the phone and called the Peters' apartment; Lincoln answered.

"I called up because this thing is on my mind. Has Marion said anything definite?"

"Marion's sick," Lincoln answered shortly. "I know this thing isn't altogther your fault, but I can't have her go to pieces about it. I'm afraid we'll have to let it slide for six months; I can't take the chance of working her up to this state again."

"I see."

"I'm sorry, Charlie."

He went back to his table. His whisky glass was empty, but he shook his head when Alix looked at it questioningly. There wasn't much he could do now except send Honoria some things; he would send her a lot of things tomorrow. He

thought rather angrily that this was just money—he had given so many people money. . . .

"No, no more," he said to another waiter. "What do I owe you?"

He would come back some day; they couldn't make him pay forever. But he wanted his child, and nothing was much good now, beside that fact. He wasn't young any more, with a lot of nice thoughts and dreams to have by himself. He was absolutely sure Helen wouldn't have wanted him to be so alone.

RUTH SUCKOW

Four Generations

"MOVE JUST A LITTLE CLOSER together—the little girl more toward the center—that's good. Now I think we'll get it."

The photographer dived once more under the black cloth.

"Stand back, Ma," a husky voice said. "You'll be in the picture."

Aunt Em stepped hastily back with a panicky look. Mercy, she didn't want to show! She hadn't had time to get her dress changed yet, had come right out of the kitchen where she was baking pies to see the photograph taken. She was in her old dark blue kitchen dress and had her hair just wadded up until she could get time to comb it. It didn't give her much time for dressing up, having all this crowd to cook for.

The boys, and Uncle Chris, standing away back on the edges, grinned appreciatively. Fred whispered to Clarence, "Laugh if Ma got in it." The way she jumped back, and her unconsciousness of the ends sticking up from her little wad of hair, delighted the boys. When they looked at each other, a little remembering glint came into their eyes.

There was quite a crowd of onlookers. Aunt Em. Uncle Chris in his good trousers, and his shirt-sleeves, his sunburned face dark brown above the white collar that Aunt Em had

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made him put on because of Charlie's. Uncle Gus and Aunt Sophie Spfierschlage had come over to dinner, and stood back against the white house wall, Aunt Sophie mountainous in her checked gingham. The boys, of course, and Bernie Schuldt, who was working for Chris; and another fellow who had come to look at some hogs and who was standing there, conscious of his old overalls and torn straw hat, mumbling, "Well, didn't know I was gona find anything like this goin' on." . . . Charlie's wife, Ella, had been given a chair where she could have a good view of the proceedings. She tried to smile and wave her handkerchief when little Phyllis looked around at her. Then she put her handkerchief to her eyes, lifting up her glasses with their narrow light shell rims, still smiling a little painfully. She had to think from how far Katherine had come.

Aunt Em and Aunt Sophie were whispering: "Ain't it a shame Edna couldn't get over! They coulda took one of Chris and her, and Marine and Merle, with Grandpa, too. . . . That little one looks awful cute, don't she? . . . Well, what takes him so long? Grandpa won't sit there much longer. I should think they coulda had it taken by this time a'ready."

They all watched the group on the lawn. They had decided that the snowball bushes would "make a nice background." The blossoms were gone, but the leaves were dark green, and thick. What a day for taking a picture! It would be so much better out here than in the house. Katherine had made them take it right after dinner, so that little Phyllis would not be late for her nap—nothing must ever interfere with that child's nap. It was the brightest, hottest time of the day. The tall orange summer lilies seemed to open and shimmer in the heat. Things were so green—the country lawn with its thick grass, the heavy foliage of the maple trees against the blue, summery sky of July. The thin varnished supports of the camera stand glittered yellow and sticky. The black cloth of the lens looked thick, dense, hot. The photographer's shirt was dazzling white in the sun, and when he drew his head out from under the

cloth his round face shone pink. His coat made a black splotch tossed on the grass.

"The little girl more toward the center."

All three of the others tried anxiously to make little Phyllis more conspicuous. "Here, we've got to have you showing—my, my!—whether the rest of us do or not," Charlie said jovially. Grandpa's small, aged, frail hand moved a little as if he were going to draw the child in front of him—but, with a kind of delicacy, did not quite touch her little arm.

They had to wait while a little fleecy cloud crossed the sun, putting a brief, strange, cool shadow over the vivid lawn. In that moment the onlookers were aware of the waiting group. Four generations! Great-grandfather, grandfather, mother, daughter. It was all the more impressive when they thought of Katherine and Phyllis having come from so many miles away. The snowball bushes were densely green behind them—almost dusky in the heat. Grandpa's chair had been placed out there—a homemade chair of willow branches. To think that these four belonged together!

Grandpa, sitting in the chair, might have belonged to another world. Small, bent like a little old troll, foreign with his back cambric skullcap, his blue, far-apart peasant eyes with their still gaze, his thin, silvery beard. His hands, gnarled from years of farm work in a new country, clasped the homemade knotted stick that he held between his knees. His feet, in old felt slippers with little tufted wool flowers, were set flat on the ground. He wore the checked shirt of an old farmer. . . . It hardly seemed that Charlie was his son. Plump and soft, dressed in the easy garments, of good quality and yet a trifle careless, of Middle Western small-town prosperity. His shaven face, paler now than it used to be and showing his age in the folds that had come about his chin; his glasses with shell rims and gold bows; the few strands of grayish hair brushed across his pale, luminous skull. A small-town banker. Now he looked both impressed and shamefaced at having the photograph

taken. . . . And then Katherine, taking after no one knew whom. Slender, a little haggard and worn, still young, her pale, delicate face and the cords in her long, soft throat, her little collar bones, her dark, intelligent weak eyes behind her thick black-rimmed glasses. Katherine had always been like that. Refined, "finicky," studious, thoughtful. Her hand, slender and a trifle sallow, lay on Phyllis's shoulder.

Phyllis. . . . Her little yellow frock made her vivid as a canary bird against the dark green of the foliage. Yellow—the relatives did not know whether they liked that, bright yellow. Still, she did look sweet. They hadn't thought Katherine's girl would be so pretty. Of course the care that Katherine took of her—everything had to revolve around that child. There was something faintly exotic about her liquid brown eyes with their jet-black lashes, the shining straight gold-brown hair, the thick bangs that lay, parted a little and damp with the heat, on the pure white of her forehead. Her little precise "Eastern accent." . . . Grandpa looked wonderingly at the bare arms, round and soft and tiny, white and moist in the heat. Fragile blue veins made a flowerlike tracery of indescribable purity on the white skin. Soft, tender, exquisite . . . ach, what a little girl was here, like a princess!

The cloud passed. Katherine's white and Phyllis's yellow shone out again from the green. The others stood back watching, a heavy stolid country group against the white wall of the farmhouse that showed bright against the farther green of the grove. Beyond lay the orchard and the rank green spreading cornfields where little silvery clouds of gnats went shimmering over the moist richness of the leaves.

"Watch—he's taking it now!"

In the breathless silence they could hear the long whirr and rush of a car on the brown country road beyond the grove.

Well, the picture was taken. Everyone was glad to be released from the strain.

Grandpa's chair had been placed nearer the house, under some maple trees. Charlie stayed out there with him a while. It was his duty, he felt, to talk to the old man a while when he was here at the farm. He didn't get over very often—well, it was a hundred miles from Rock River, and the roads weren't very good up here in Sac township. His car stood out at the edge of the grove in the shade. The new closed car that he had lately bought, a "coach," opulent, shining, with its glass and upholstery and old-blue drapes, there against the background of the evergreen grove with its fallen branches and pieces of discarded farm machinery half visible in the deepest shade.

It wasn't really very hard to get away from Rock River and the bank. He and Ella took plenty of trips. He ought to come and see his father more than he did. But he seemed to have nothing to say to Grandpa. The old man had scarcely been off the place for years.

"Well, Pa, you keep pretty well, do you?"

"Ja, pretty goot . . . ja, for so old as I am—"

"Oh, now, you mustn't think of yourself as so old."

Charlie yawned, re-crossed his legs. He lighted a cigar.

"Chris's corn doing pretty well this season?"

"Ach, dot I know nuttings about. Dey don't tell me nuttings."

"Well, you've had your day at farming, Pa."

"Ja . . . ja, ja . . ."

He fumbled in the pocket of his coat, drew out an ancient black pipe.

Charlie said cheerfully, "Have some tobacco?" He held out a can.

The old man peered into it, sniffed. "Ach, dot stuff? No, no, dot is shust like shavings. I smoke de real old tobacco."

"Like it strong, hey?"

They both puffed away.

Grandpa sat in the old willow chair. His blue eyes had a look half wistful, half resentful. Charlie was his oldest child.

He would have liked to talk with Charlie. He was always wishing that Charlie would come, always planning how he would tell him things—about how the old ways were going and how the farmers did now, how none of them told him things—but when Charlie came, then that car was always standing ready there to take him right back home again, and there seemed nothing to be said. He always remembered Charlie as the young man, the little boy who used to work beside him in the field—and then when Charlie came, he was this stranger. Charlie was a town man now. He owned a bank! He had forgotten all about the country, and the old German ways. To think of Charlie, their son, being a rich banker, smoking cigars, riding round in a fine carriage with glass windows. . . .

"Dot's a fine wagon you got dere."

Charlie laughed. "That's a coach, Pa."

"So? Coach, is dot what you call it? Like de old kings, like de emperors, de kaisers, rode around in. Ja, you can live in dot. Got windows and doors, curtains—is dere a table, too, stove—no? Ja, dot's a little house on wheels."

He pursed out his lips comically. But ach, such a carriage! He could remember when he was glad enough to get to town in a lumber wagon. Grandma and the children used to sit in the back on the grain sacks. His old hands felt of the smooth knots of his stick. He went back, back, into reverie. . . . He muttered just above his breath, "Ach, ja, ja, ja . . . dot was all so long ago. . . ."

Charlie was silent, too. He looked at the car, half drew out his watch, put it back again. . . . Katherine crossed the lawn. His eyes followed her. Bluish-gray, a little faded behind his modern glasses—there was resentment, bewilderment, wistfulness in them at the same time, and loneliness. He was thinking of how he used to bring Kittie out here to the farm when she was a little girl, when Chris used to drive to Germantown and get them with a team and two-seated buggy. They had come oftener than now when they had the car. . . . "Papa, *really* did you live out here—on this farm?" He had been both

proud and a little jealous because she wasn't sunburned and wiry, like Chris's children. A little, slim, long-legged, soft-skinned, dark-eyed girl. "Finicky" about what she ate and what she did—he guessed he and Ella had encouraged her in that. Well, he hadn't had much when he was a child, and he'd wanted his little girl to have the things he'd missed. He wanted her to have more than his brothers' and sisters' children. He was Charlie, the one who lived in town, the successful one. Music lessons, drawing lessons, college . . . and here she had grown away from her father and mother. Chris's children lived close around him, but it sometimes seemed to him that he and Ella had lost Kittie. Living away off there in the East. And when she came home, although she was carefully kind and dutiful and affectionate, there was something aloof. He thought jealously, maybe it would have been better if they hadn't given her all those things, had kept her right at home with them. . . . It hadn't been as much pleasure as he had anticipated having his little grandchild there. There was her "schedule" that Kittie was so pernickety about. He'd been proud to have people in Rock River see her beauty and perfection, but he hadn't been able to take her around and show her off as he'd hoped.

All day he had been seeing a little slim, fastidious girl in a white dress and white hair ribbons and black patent-leather slippers, clinging to his hand with little soft fingers when he took her out to see the cows and pigs. . . . "Well, Kittie, do you wish we lived out here instead of in town?" She shook her head, and her small underlip curled just a little. . . .

He saw Chris and Gus off near the house. They could talk about how crops were coming, and he could tell them, with a banker's authority, about business conditions. He stirred uneasily, got up, yawned, stretched his arms, said with a little touch of shame:

"Well, Pa, I guess I'll go over and talk to Chris a while. I'll see you again before we leave."

"Ja—" The old man did not try to keep him. He watched

Charlie's plump figure cross the grass. Ja, he had more to say to the young ones.

Aunt Em was through baking. She had gone into the bedroom to "get cleaned up." She brought out chairs to the front porch. "Sit out here. Here's a chair, Ella—here, Katherine. Ach, Sophie, take a better chair than that."—"Naw, this un'll do for me, Em."

"The womenfolks"—Katherine shuddered away from that phrase. She had always, ever since she was a little girl, despised sitting about this way with "the womenfolks." Planted squat in their chairs, rocking, yawning, telling over and over about births and deaths and funerals and sicknesses. There was a kind of feminine grossness about it that offended what had always been called her "finickiness."

Her mother enjoyed it. She was different from Aunt Em and Aunt Sophie, lived in a different way—a small, plump, elderly woman with waved grayish-silvery hair and a flowered voile dress with little fussy laces, feminine strapped slippers. But still there was something that she liked about sitting here in the drowsy heat and going over and over things with the other women. Sometimes, to Katherine's suffering disgust, she would add items about the birth of Katherine herself—"Well, I thought sure Kittie was going to be a boy. She kicked so hard—" "Oh, Mother, spare us!" Aunt Em would give a fat, comfortable laugh—"Don't look so rambunctious now, does she? Kittie, ain't you ever gona get a little flesh on your bones? You study too hard. She oughta get out and ride the horses like Edna does."

Aunt Sophie Spfierschlage—that was the way she sat rocking, her feet flat on the floor, her stomach comfortably billowing, beads of sweat on her heavy chin and lips and around the roots of her stiff, dull hair. Well, thank goodness she was only Aunt Em's sister, she wasn't really related to the Kleins. Aunt Em was bad enough.

They used to laugh over her fastidious disgust, when she sat here, a delicate, critical little girl who didn't want to get on one of the horses or jump from rafters into the hay. "Kittie thinks that's terrible. Well, Kittie, that's the way things happen." "Ach, she won't be so squeamish when she grows up and has three or four of her own." Now she sat beside them, delicate, still too thin, to Aunt Em's amazement. "Ain't you got them ribs covered up yet? What's the matter? Don't that man of yours give you enough to eat?"—her soft skin pale and her eyes dark from the heat, dressed with a kind of fastidious precision, an ultra-refinement. A fragile bar pin holding the soft white silk of her blouse, her fine dark hair drooping about her face. "Well, you ain't changed much since you got married!" Aunt Em had said. They expected to admit her now to their freemasonry, to have *her* add interesting items about the birth of Phyllis.

Phyllis—her little darling! As if the exquisite miracle of Phyllis could have anything in common with these things! Katherine suffered just as she had always suffered from even small vulgarities. But she sat courteous and ladylike now, a slight dutiful smile on her lips.

"Where does she get them brown eyes? They ain't the color of yours, are they? Turn around and let's have a look at you—no, I thought yours was kinda darker."

Aunt Em had come out now, had squatted down into another chair. "I guess her papa's got the brown eyes."

"Yes, I think she looks a little like Willis."

Ella said almost resentfully, "Well, I don't know whether she takes after Willis's folks or not, but I can't see that she looks one bit like Kittie or any of us."

"Well," Aunt Em said, "but look at Kittie. She don't look like you or Charlie neither. But I guess she's yours just the same, ain't she, Ella? . . . Say, you remember that Will Fuchs? Ja, his girl's got one they say don't belong to who it ought to. Her and that young Bender from over South—"

Katherine did not listen. How long before they could leave? She had thought it right to bring Phyllis over here where her great-grandfather lived, as her father had wished. But it seemed worse to her than ever. She knew that Aunt Em wouldn't let them go without something more to eat, another of her great heavy meals with pie and cake and coffee. Her mother had always said, as if in extenuation of her visible enjoyment of the visit and the food: "Well, Aunt Em means well. Why don't you try and talk with her? She wants to talk with you." But Aunt Em and the Spfierschlages and the whole place seemed utterly alien and horrible to Katherine. For a moment, while they had been taking the photograph out on the lawn, she had felt touched with a sense of beauty. But she had never belonged here. She felt at home in Willis's quiet old frame house in New England, with his precise, elderly New England parents—"refinement," "culture," Willis's father reading "the classics," taking the *Atlantic Monthly* ever since their marriage. She had always felt that those were the kind of people she ought to have had, the kind of home. Of course she loved Father and Mother and was loyal to them. They depended upon her as their only child.

This porch! It seemed to express the whole of her visits to the farm. It was old-fashioned now—a long, narrow porch with a fancy railing, the posts trimmed with red. Her ancestral home! It was utterly alien to her.

They were talking to her again.

"Where's the girl—in taking her nap yet?"

"Yes, she's sleeping."

"Ach, you hadn't ought to make her sleep all the time when she's off visiting. I baked a little piece of piecrust for her. I thought I'd give it to her while it was nice and warm."

"Oh, better not try to give her piecrust," Ella said warningly.

"Ach, that ain't gona hurt her—nice homemade pie. Mine always et that."

"Ja, mine did too."

Katherine's lips closed firmly. She couldn't hurry and hurt Father and Mother—but oh, to get Phyllis home! Father—he was always trying to give the child something she shouldn't have, he wanted to spoil her as he had tried to spoil Katherine herself. . . . She shut her lips tight to steel herself against the pitifulness of the sudden vision of Father—getting so much older these last few years—looking like a child bereft of his toy when she had firmly taken away the things with which he had come trotting happily home for his grandchild. He had gradually drawn farther and farther away. Once he had hurt her by saying significantly, when Phyllis had wanted a pink blotter in the bank: "You'll have to ask your mother. Maybe there's something in it to hurt you. *Grandpa* don't know." He had wanted to take Phyllis to a little cheap circus that had come to town, to show her off and exhibit her. Mother was more sympathetic, even a little proud of retailing to the other "ladies" how careful Katherine was in bringing up the child, what a "nice family" Willis had. But even she was plaintive and didn't understand. Both she and Father thought that Katherine and Willis were "carrying it too far" when they decided to have Willis teach the child until they could find the proper school for her.

She heard a little sleepy, startled voice from within the house—"Moth-uh!"

"Uh-huh! There's somebody!" Aunt Em exclaimed delightedly.

Katherine hurried into the darkened bedroom where Phyllis lay on Aunt Em's best bedspread. The shades were down, but there was the feeling of the hot sunlight back of them. Phyllis's bare arms and legs were white and dewy. Her damp golden-brown bangs were pushed aside. Katherine knelt adoring. She began to whisper.

"Is Mother's darling awake? . . . Shall we go home soon—see Father? Sleep in her own little room?" . . . Her throat

tightened with a homesick vision of the little room with the white bed and the yellow curtains.

They had left Grandpa alone again. Charlie and the other men were standing out beside the car, bending down and examining it, feeling of the tires, trying the handles of the doors.

Grandpa had left his chair in the yard and gone to the old wooden rocker that stood just inside the door of his room. His room was part of the old house, the one that he and Grandma had had here on the farm. It opened out upon the back yard, with a little worn, narrow plank out from the door. It looked out upon the mound of the old cyclone cellar, with its wooden door, where now Aunt Em kept her vegetables in sacks on the damp, cool floor, with moist earthen jars of plum and apple butter on the shelf against the cobwebbed wall. The little triangular chicken houses were scattered about in the back yard, and beyond them was the orchard where now small apples were only a little lighter than the vivid summer green of the heavy foliage and where little, dark, shiny bubbles of aromatic sap had oozed out from the rough, crusty bark.

The shadows in the orchard were drawing out long toward the east, and the aisles of sunlight, too, looked longer. The groups of people moved about more. Everything had the freshened look of late afternoon. Grandpa rocked a little. He puffed on his pipe, took it out and held it between his fingers. It left his lower lip moist and shining above the fringe of silvery beard. His blue eyes kept looking toward the orchard, in a still, fathomless gaze. His lips moved at times.

"Ach, ja, ja, ja. . . ." A kind of mild, sighing groan. It had pleased him that they had wanted the photograph taken, with the little great-grandchild. But that was over now. They had left him alone. And again, with a movement of his head, "Ja, dot was all so long ago."

Beyond the orchard, beyond the dark green cornfields that lay behind it, beyond the river and the town, beyond all the wide western country, and the ocean . . . what were his

fixed blue eyes, intent and inward and sad, visioning now?

The rocker was framed in the doorway of his room. Even the odor of the room was foreign. His bed with a patchwork quilt, a little dresser, a chest of drawers. The ancient wallpaper had been torn off and the walls calcimined a sky-blue. Against the inner one hung his big silver watch, slowly ticking. . . . His eyes, blue, and his hair under the little black cap, his beard, were silvery. . . . A German text with gaudy flowers hung on a woolen cord above the bed. "*Der Herr ist mein Hirte.*"

He started. "Nun—who is dot?"

He did not know that little Phyllis had been watching him. Standing outside the door, in her bright canary yellow, her beautiful liquid brown eyes solemnly studying him. She was half afraid. She had never seen anything so old as "Great-grandfather." The late afternoon sunlight shimmered in the fine texture of his thin silvery beard. It brought out little frostings and marks and netted lines on his old face in which the eyes were so blue. One hand lay upon his knee. She stared wonderingly at the knots that the knuckles made, the brownish spots, the thick veins, the queer, stretched, shiny look of the skin between the bones. She looked at his black pipe, his funny little cap, his slippers with the tufted flowers. . . .

"Ach, so? You t'ink Grandpa is a funny old man, den? You want to look at him? So?"

He spoke softly. A kind of pleased smiling look came upon his face. He stretched out his hand slowly and cautiously, as if it were a butterfly poised just outside his door. A sudden longing to get this small, pretty thing nearer, an ingenuous delight, possessed him now that he was alone with her. He spoke as one speaks to a bird toward which one is carefully edging nearer, afraid that a sudden motion will startle its bright eyes and make it take wing.

"Is dis a little yellow bird? Can it sing a little song?"

A faint smile dawned on the serious parted lips. He nodded

at her. She seemed to have come a little closer. He, too, looked in wonderment, as he had done before, at the shining hair, the fragile blue veins on the white temples, the moist, pearly white of the little neck, marveling as he would have marveled at some beautiful strange bird that might have alighted a moment on his doorstep. . . .

"Can't sing a little song? No? Den Grandpa will have to sing one to you."

He had been thinking of songs as he sat here, they had been murmuring somewhere in his mind. Old, old songs that he had known long ago in the old country. . . . His little visitor stood quite still as his faint, quavering voice sounded with a kind of dim sweetness in the sunshine. . . .

"Du, du liegst mir im Herzen,
Du, du liegst mir im Sinn,
Du, du machst mir viel Schmerzen,
Weist nicht wie gut ich dir bin—
Ja, ja, ja, ja, weist nicht wie gut ich dir bin."

The gaze of her brown, shining eyes never wavered, and a soft glow of fascinated interest grew in them as the sad wailing simplicity of the old tune quavered on the summer air. For a moment she was quite near, they understood each other.

"You like dot? Like Grandpa's song?"

She nodded. A tiny pleased smile curved her fresh lips.

Then suddenly, with a little delicate scared movement, as if after all she had discovered that the place was strange, she flitted away to her mother.

DOROTHY PARKER

The Sexes

THE YOUNG MAN WITH THE scenic cravat glanced nervously down the sofa at the girl in the fringed dress. She was examining her handkerchief; it might have been the first one of its kind she had seen, so deep was her interest in its material, form, and possibilities. The young man cleared his throat, without necessity or success, producing a small, syncopated noise.

"Want a cigarette?" he said.

"No, thank you," she said. "Thank you ever so much just the same."

"Sorry I've only got these kind," he said. "You got any of your own?"

"I really don't know," she said. "I probably have, thank you."

"Because if you haven't," he said, "it wouldn't take me a minute to go up to the corner and get you some."

"Oh, thank you, but I wouldn't have you go to all that trouble for anything," she said. "It's awfully sweet of you to think of it. Thank you ever so much."

"Will you for God's sakes stop thanking me?" he said.

"Really," she said, "I didn't know I was saying anything out of the way. I'm awfully sorry if I hurt your feelings. I know what it feels like to get your feelings hurt. I'm sure I didn't

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realize it was an insult to say 'thank you' to a person. I'm not exactly in the habit of having people swear at me because I say 'thank you' to them."

"I did not swear at you!" he said.

"Oh, you didn't?" she said. "I see."

"My God," he said, "all I said, I simply asked you if I couldn't go out and get you some cigarettes. Is there anything in that to get up in the air about?"

"Who's up in the air?" she said. "I'm sure I didn't know it was a criminal offense to say I wouldn't dream of giving you all that trouble. I'm afraid I must be awfully stupid, or something."

"Do you want me to go out and get you some cigarettes; or don't you?" he said.

"Goodness," she said, "if you want to go so much, please don't feel you have to stay here. I wouldn't have you feel you had to stay for anything."

"Ah, don't be that way, will you?" he said.

"Be what way?" she said. "I'm not being any way."

"What's the matter?" he said.

"Why, nothing," she said. "Why?"

"You've been funny all evening," he said. "Hardly said a word to me, ever since I came in."

"I'm terribly sorry you haven't been having a good time," she said. "For goodness' sakes, don't feel you have to stay here and be bored. I'm sure there are millions of places you could be having a lot more fun. The only thing, I'm a little bit sorry I didn't know before, that's all. When you said you were coming over tonight, I broke a lot of dates to go to the theater and everything. But it doesn't make a bit of difference. I'd much rather have you go and have a good time. It isn't very pleasant to sit here and feel you're boring a person to death."

"I'm not bored!" he said. "I don't want to go any place! Ah, honey, won't you tell me what's the matter? Ah, please."

"I haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about," she

said. "There isn't a thing on earth the matter. I don't know what you mean."

"Yes, you do," he said. "There's something the trouble. Is it anything I've done, or anything?"

"Goodness," she said, "I'm sure it isn't any of my business, anything you do. I certainly wouldn't feel I had any right to criticize."

"Will you stop talking like that?" he said. "Will you, please?"

"Talking like what?" she said.

"You know," he said. "That's the way you were talking over the telephone today, too. You were so snotty when I called you up, I was afraid to talk to you."

"I beg your pardon," she said. "What did you say I was?"

"Well, I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to say that. You get me so balled up."

"You see," she said, "I'm really not in the habit of hearing language like that. I've never had a thing like that said to me in my life."

"I told you I was sorry, didn't I?" he said. "Honest, honey, I didn't mean it. I don't know how I came to say a thing like that. Will you excuse me? Please?"

"Oh, certainly," she said. "Goodness, don't feel you have to apologize to me. It doesn't make any difference at all. It just seems a little bit funny to have somebody you were in the habit of thinking was a gentleman come to your home and use language like that to you, that's all. But it doesn't make the slightest bit of difference."

"I guess nothing I say makes any difference to you," he said. "You seem to be sore at me."

"I'm sore at you?" she said. "I can't understand what put that idea in your head. Why should I be sore at you?"

"That's what I'm asking you," he said. "Won't you tell me what I've done? Have I done something to hurt your feelings, honey? The way you were, over the phone, you had me worried all day. I couldn't do a lick of work."

"I certainly wouldn't like to feel," she said, "that I was interfering with your work. I know there are lots of girls that don't think anything of doing things like that, but I think it's terrible. It certainly isn't very nice to sit here and have someone tell you you interfere with his business."

"I didn't say that!" he said. "I didn't say it!"

"Oh, didn't you?" she said. "Well, that was the impression I got. It must be my stupidity."

"I guess maybe I better go," he said. "I can't get right. Everything I say seems to make you sorer and sorer. Would you rather I'd go?"

"Please do just exactly whatever you like," she said. "I'm sure the last thing I want to do is have you stay here when you'd rather be some place else. Why don't you go some place where you won't be bored? Why don't you go up to Florence Leaming's? I know she'd love to have you."

"I don't want to go up to Florence Leaming's!" he said. "What would I want to go up to Florence Leaming's for? She gives me a pain."

"Oh, really?" she said. "She didn't seem to be giving you so much of a pain at Elsie's party last night, I notice. I notice you couldn't even talk to anybody else, that's how much of a pain she gave you."

"Yeah, and you know why I was talking to her?" he said.

"Why, I suppose you think she's attractive," she said. "I suppose some people do. It's perfectly natural. Some people think she's quite pretty."

"I don't know whether she's pretty or not," he said. "I wouldn't know her if I saw her again. Why I was talking to her was you wouldn't even give me a tumble, last night. I came up and tried to talk to you, and you just said, 'Oh, how do you do'—and you turned right away and wouldn't look at me."

"I wouldn't look at you?" she said. "Oh, that's awfully funny. Oh, that's marvelous. You don't mind if I laugh, do you?"

"Go ahead and laugh your head off," he said. "But you wouldn't."

"Well, the minute you came in the room," she said, "you started making such a fuss over Florence Leaming, I thought you never wanted to see anybody else. You two seemed to be having such a wonderful time together, goodness knows I wouldn't have butted in for anything."

"My God," he said, "this what's-her-name girl came up and began talking to me before I even saw anybody else, and what could I do? I couldn't sock her in the nose, could I?"

"I certainly didn't see you try," she said.

"You saw me try to talk to you, didn't you?" he said. "And what did you do? 'Oh, how do you do.' Then this what's-her-name came up again, and there I was, stuck. Florence Leaming! I think she's terrible. Know what I think of her? I think she's a damn little fool. That's what I think of her."

"Well, of course," she said, "that's the impression she always gave me, but I don't know. I've heard people say she's pretty. Honestly I have."

"Why, she can't be pretty in the same room with you," he said.

"She has got an awfully funny nose," she said. "I really feel sorry for a girl with a nose like that."

"She's got a terrible nose," he said. "You've got a beautiful nose. Gee, you've got a pretty nose."

"Oh, I have not," she said. "You're crazy."

"And beautiful eyes," he said, "and beautiful hair and a beautiful mouth. And beautiful hands. Let me have one of the little hands. Ah, look atta little hand! Who's got the prettiest hands in the world? Who's the sweetest girl in the world?"

"I don't know," she said. "Who?"

"You don't know!" he said. "You do so, too, know."

"I do not," she said. "Who? Florence Leaming?"

"Oh, Florence Leaming, my eye!" he said. "Getting sore

about Florence Leaming! And me not sleeping all last night and not doing a stroke of work all day because you wouldn't speak to me! A girl like you getting sore about a girl like Florence Leaming!"

"I think you're just perfectly crazy," she said. "I was not sore! What on earth ever made you think I was? You're simply crazy. Ow, my new pearl beads! Wait a second till I take them off. There!"

JOHN D. SWAIN

One Head Well Done

»»Visitors to the city of Kemper usually find something pleasant to say about the estate of Beulah Land, which lies somewhat to the north of the river approach, well beyond the rolling mills and foundries whose smoke wreathes the town in a perpetual and melancholy fog. Beulah Land is the oldest holding in Kemper; its mellow brick manse, colonial Dutch in design, with walls to which ivy two centuries old clings, stands in the midst of ten acres of smooth lawns dowered with picturesque trees.

It is the ancestral estate of the Vedders; and the Reverend Peter Vedder, a retired missionary, the last of his line, save for some nieces and nephews, had for the past four or five years lived here, in company with a great array of solemn-faced, or pink and jolly, ancestral portraits, some unusual early colonial furniture and silver, a few servants, and his memories of strange adventures in many lands.

Often, in steaming jungle or entrancing isle, or on some bleak plateau of a colder clime, he had closed his eyes to rest upon the vision of this, his home until he graduated from college and then from the seminary. For long years it had heartened him in the performance of heroic or fatiguing labors.

In good time, advancing years and the missionary board reprieved him, and he turned his steps toward home and a

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well earned rest. And with him he had brought many curious slips and roots to plant about the broad acres of the place he had named Beulah Land. Also, from time to time during his labors in tropical fields, he had sent home cuttings to be planted for him, awaiting his return. Thus it was that amid many trees of native growth one might see whole ranks of Japanese pagoda trees, like crippled mendicants raising twisted limbs in supplication; and not far from the house, he had caused to be erected, from designs of his own, a sort of pagoda of masonry, with open sides and many-colored tile roof culminating in a gilded bell. A lazy little brook loafed through the grounds, and in places where it widened out its surface was covered with gigantic pink water lilies, brought from Egypt.

A good place to look upon, restful, surrounded by a hawthorn hedge not too high to look over, yet almost impenetrable to trespassers. But the wide gates were never closed, and wayfarers were welcome at any time. In summer, the good man always had tea served in the pagoda, with little delicacies to which long years in far countries had accustomed his palate. There were tiny salt fish, dried in the hot sand, known as Bombay duck; queer chutneys, enticing marmalades in fat-bellied earthen pots, pungent tobacco for smokers, and always plenty of very thin slices of toast and unsalted butter. The Reverend Peter Vedder seldom lacked company at tea, representatives of the older families with whom he had grown up, or curious strangers whom he never repulsed, not a few bearing subscription lists to which he nearly always contributed.

More than a few of those who slowed down while passing Beulah Land, to rest their eyes on its placid and tree-shaded vistas, beheld something more startling than might have been looked for in this serene abode. Those beholding it for the first time always supposed it to be an unusually large monkey, or, rather, an ape; but even when familiarity had taught them otherwise, they never failed to pause and smile. For, with in-

conceivable agility, the figure disported itself in the trees of Beulah Land, swinging by the arms, letting go and seeming to fly through the air, to grasp unerringly a stout limb fifteen or even twenty feet away. The figure was always barefoot, ambidextrous, and unquestionably happy.

It was natural to compare this arboreal gymnast to an ape; but there was this difference, besides that of size. Even a monkey does, now and then, fall from a tree. This figure never did. Indeed, he could spot an ordinary monkey two coconuts, and beat him to the top of the tallest tulip tree in the yard. The performer had been brought home by the clergyman, and was by birthright a citizen of the mysterious island of Borneo. For many years in that country, he had served as Vedder's valet, cook, and bodyguard. So great was his affection for his master that when his master returned to America, the little brown man insisted on coming along; and glad indeed was Vedder to bring him.

The missionary was accustomed to refer to him, not without a certain noble pride, as "one of my converts." And in saying this he was entirely honest. He supposed that his little man had embraced the doctrines which he had taught. He appeared to have done so. He attended church services and sat respectfully through long and incomprehensible sermons and, when questioned by Vedder as to his soul, always tried to answer what he thought was expected of him. He wore, usually, civilized garments; even endured a collar and necktie and shoes; though as a rule he compromised on sandals, and when he relaxed thoroughly, went barefoot.

Despite his long association with white men, he could barely understand simple sentences, and his vocabulary did not cover more than a hundred words. His tribal name was so impossible to Western lips and ears that he had come to be known, even to Vedder, as "H'lo," this representing as well as could be the Borneo gentleman's attempt to utter our national salute.

At frequent intervals he performed his daily dozen, swing-

ing from limb to limb of the trees. Weighing not over a hundred and ten pounds, he was prodigiously strong, as well as quick.

He could not only walk on his hands, but upon his extended finger tips. He could, from a dead stand, leap ten feet forward, backward, sideways, like a great spider. And with the blowpipe, one of which he had brought along with him, he could bring a swift-flying bird to ground, pierced by a feathered dart which, in H'lo's native island, he had known how to impregnate with a poison that meant certain death to man or beast. Also, he could use the native sword-knife of his people neatly and effectively. But these gory exploits he had long since put aside.

His position in Vedder's household was a trifle vague. He was listed as a servant and had quarters in the upper story of the old stable, now used as a garage. He followed Vedder about like a spaniel, but his services were nominal. Usually, he served the tea things, clad in white linen, with a turban at one end and sandals at the other. It always pleased the guests. Otherwise, the housekeeper, or maid, could have done it as well, or better.

Vedder would have been greatly surprised had he been able to look into H'lo's heart. There he would have learned that the silent, wooden-faced little man heartily pitied the venerable scholar. For H'lo had been, in his youth, apprenticed to a native priest, or medicine man, or miracle worker; had, after serving his time, become the *puri-puri* of a village of head-hunters. With a few mango seeds, a tube of bamboo, some gums and spices and herbs, and a sharp knife, he could have stepped onto the apron of any vaudeville stage and stopped the show. There was no limit to the salary he might have demanded and received; but it never occurred to him to capitalize the secrets he could work but could not himself explain.

He knew, however, that his venerable master, a holy man, was unable to do so much as palm a pebble or practise the simplest ventriloquism or hypnotism. Even the rudiments of

magic were unknown to him. And yet, while utterly unable to appease or evoke the spirits of the departed, Vedder gravely proclaimed his knowledge of eternity and the future life.

Little H'lo sadly shook his head. It was beyond his poor brains to reason out! But he loved his master, and Vedder had once risked his own life to save his; had treated him with unfailing kindness, had never poked fun at him. Therefore, it behooved H'lo, as a loyal Bornean, to pretend to believe in the Reverend Peter Vedder's creed and to be a faithful member of his church. Secretly, behind the old stable, H'lo from time to time appeased his own evil spirits and worshiped his gods, in the traditional manner of his race for countless centuries.

It has been said that the old missionary had come home to rest; and yet, he didn't rest. Though well stricken in years, he was still erect and stalwart, and above all he had the missionary zeal. Fifty years of fighting against the devil had rendered him incapable of sitting still and uttering no protest. And the city he returned to was a far different place from the big, sleepy town he had left. It had grown incredibly richer, and it had accumulated slums. In tune with the hectic times, it had jazzed along the highway of fast cars, night clubs, roadhouses, and frantic pleasures. Corruption reigned secure in high places. Politics was wedded to bootlegging, and to worse than that. Protection could be bought. Revenge could be sated, for a price.

The year that young Vedder had sailed away to his first missionary field, in Ceylon, a young girl of Kemper had won renown and favorable comment in the one city newspaper for working the most decorative worsted motto in a Sunday-school competition. The very week he returned, a battered veteran, a young girl of about the same age had just broken the world's record by climbing a tall flagpole, lashed to a bos'n's chair, and remaining aloft, in view of cheering multitudes, for twenty-six days and nights, having her food and drink and cigarettes hoisted to her on a pulley.

When Vedder left home, wine was to be had in prosperous

homes, ale in all homes. On New Year's Day, every young man donned his best clothes and called on all the girls he knew, and was served with punch or even champagne, and cakes, and sandwiches, and returned home late at night the worse for dyspepsia or befuddlement. But when Vedder returned, wine and strong drink were officially banished; and high-school children were drinking varnish removers and etching fluid from expensive crystal and silver flasks. While Vedder was still a seminary student, a company of players had been chased from Kemper because two women members of the cast appeared in black tights. He returned to find that revues were popular with the best Kemperites, and that the entire wardrobe of the chorus of eighty might have been packed into a lunch basket.

The crusading blood of Peter Vedder curdled in his ministerial veins when, after some delay in getting settled, he began to look about him and to note with a troubled, and finally with a kindling, eye the sin which seemed to be stalking by day, and especially by night, along the highways of his native town. Most of those he had known as a boy and a young man were dead or had migrated to distant places. Few landmarks were left.

His own estate was the exception: the proudly exhibited historic demesne of Kemper. Of money, he had more than enough. His forbears had been thrifty men; real-estate values had advanced enormously. Had he wished to sell his land and house he could have retired almost a millionaire. But this was furthest from his mind.

The hours he had planned to spend in pleasant reading in the great, dark library, or beneath one of his trees on the lawn, he devoted to scanning the newspapers, or to frowning consideration of the open corruption that offended him both as a citizen of Kemper, and as a missioner of God. He was born a fighter; and he had fought in countries where life was never too easy and death was often at one's elbow.

He girded up his loins for battle and presently became a thorn in the flesh of certain influential parties. He was too important to be ignored; his reputation was more than local, and great men visited him from time to time. He had what the Kemper bosses termed "pull," but what was really character, recognized by important state and national officials. He could get things done; make investigations function. When one of his fiery articles was too hot for the local press to dare use, he would have it printed at his own expense on dodgers, and circulated where it would do the most damage. He bought whole pages of newspaper advertising for his campaigns for decency. Not afraid to call names out loud, he made a great many furtive gentlemen exceedingly uncomfortable. He became, in short, a nuisance.

Which brings us to the present year, and to the season of late spring, when the trees were putting on their smartest and thickest gowns of green, and the lawns of Beulah Land were dense velvet carpets, and little frogs sang anthems in the crooked brook that traversed the fields surrounded by the hawthorn hedge. And it brings us also to a part of town where the wonders of budding nature are not highly regarded, and where the denizens prefer stuffy rooms, the windows of which look out upon blank walls; rooms with stout chairs and sticky tables and an atmosphere of tobacco and redistilled alcohol. Such a room as that in the back of "Gory" Hammond's near-beer parlor, which was neither a parlor nor stocked with near beer.

In this sanctum the topic under consideration was nothing less than the future of the Reverend Peter Vedder. His accomplishments were aired freely and fluently. It is true that much that was vital to his life history was not so much as touched upon. There was nothing, for instance, concerning his heroic efforts during an Indian famine, when he, almost unaided, saved a whole province from being wiped out. Nothing of that time when, at the risk of his life, he effected a treaty of

peace between wild tribes far up in the mountain border of Tibet. Nor of his arriving at one of the sink holes of the Far East, an island city famous for its vice and squalor and its traffic in drugs, and of his leaving it years afterward, a credit to its island neighbors.

The accomplishments of Vedder since his return to his home city were all that interested the assembled biographers in Gory Hammond's dive. The fact that he had harassed the bootlegging trust until the price of Canadian ale had been forced up by more than two dollars a case; and the other fact that a certain street down beyond the railroad tracks now contained no less than thirty empty tenements. Also, that some half dozen gunmen and dope peddlers were now languishing in cells, instead of speeding in costly roadsters in the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness.

It was evident that the united opinion of all present was that Peter Vedder must go. He must be given the works; taken for a ride. Blotted out, in short. So that it was a mere formality when, everybody having exercised his full rights of free speech, Gory spoke, with the half grin, half snarl that characterized him in his moments of lighter humor.

"All those in favor—" he grunted. "Cont'ry minded? *It's a vote!* Le's have another li'l' drink, boys."

A simple meeting, free from malice. If there had been no disposition to glorify the missionary's record, there was likewise none to indulge in any expression of hatred. He was in their way; a nuisance. In a strictly business proposition, he was a matter of useless overhead, and as such, the city of Kemper ought not to have to carry him any longer.

Back home, in his old-fashioned library, Peter Vedder sat reading quietly from Volume 3 of a *History of Civilization During the Middle Ages*. He had no inkling that he had been the topic of a business meeting far downtown, held by men whose faces were not familiar to him, and only one or two of whom he had heard of by name.

The Reverend Peter Vedder was shot on a mild night, about half-past ten o'clock, with a full moon peering redly through a slight haze. It was the sort of evening to bewitch one into prowling across broad stretches of lawn, on which the moon cast the umber shadows of many trees. Deep in the hollow where the brook ran, the frogs were piping; the scent of lilacs charged the air. Almost perfect solitude reigned, for the street on which Beulah Land fronted was not one of the automobile arteries leading into the city, and after dark there was little traffic. The time and place were well chosen; also, it appeared that the unknown assailant had used a gun with a silencer attached. Nobody could be found who had heard, in the stillness, anything like the sound of a shot; and there were plenty near enough to have heard one.

There had been a sole witness. The little Borneo man, H'lo, as has been said, occupied an upper room in the stable, now used as a garage. Vedder drove his own car and employed no chauffeur, so that H'lo was alone nights.

Even more strongly than his master he had been wheedled by the splendor of the full moon, which had occupied a powerful place in the rites and ceremonies of his youth. He did not any longer bow down to and invoke the lunar goddess, but he loved to steal softly through the glades and copses. He had the faculty for seeing by night almost as well as a cat; on this hazy night he could have read newspaper print, had he been able to read at all. Not in any way intruding upon his master's solitary ramble, nor keeping watch over him, since he had no inkling of danger, he was yet not far away when the shot was fired.

The "Croaker," as the agent of Gory Hammond and those higher up knew him, had returned to the city to report and to build up his alibi. He had slipped away from the little back room, had seemingly been absent but a few minutes; had gone hatless and coatless from a game of stud poker. Outside he had slipped into coat and cap and located his automatic. It was

arranged that his companions should, if necessary, swear that the Croaker had been present all the evening and until well toward morning. To that end, the patrolman on beat had been invited in twice and given a drink. Each time, he saw the Croaker apparently absorbed in the game, shirt-sleeved and with a pile of chips before him and a half-empty glass.

Slipping back into the little room, his errand accomplished and his "rod" hidden, Gory Hammond had looked up, searching his veiled eyes.

"See anybody?" he asked.

The Croaker shook his head. "Nope. Only a little black stable-boy quite a ways off. And, bo! *Y'oughta seen that bozo climb a tree!*"

Hammond looked troubled. "How near was he?"

The Croaker spat on the floor. "Too far to make me. And ya can take it from me, he's up in that tree yet!"

Hammond nodded and riffled a fresh pack of cards. The Croaker reached for a bottle and poured himself a stiff drink. About the table a little sigh of relief passed. A good job, well done!

The Croaker was wrong in dismissing the little black stable-boy so easily. It is true that H'lo had climbed a tree with surprising speed. It was instinctive in him to do this in the presence of a danger he could not avert by force or stealth. And he could not avert what had happened to Peter Vedder.

He was at a considerable distance. To the Croaker, a mere vague figure which he was just able to identify as not belonging to the Nordic race. But H'lo was able to tell a great deal more about the assassin. Despite his grief and terror, he did not lose his head at all. Eyes, ears, nose, were all alert. He had caught the flicker of a shadow emerging from a tall syringa bush some paces back of the clergyman; a shadow that moved on a windless night. Instantly thereafter the shadow had taken form as a man: a man who, without attracting the attention

of his victim, presented a black, shiny tube, from whose end poured forth a red streak and a bad smell.

There was also a noise; but it was a very small noise. One that would not have attracted the attention of a chance passer on the highway. H'lo knew it for one of the weapons of civilization; a weapon that killed. He himself was unarmed. Dead, he could not avenge his master. He climbed a tree at a rate that would have left a Barbary ape breathless.

With this act, he passed from the notice of the Croaker. But he was far more dangerous aloft than on the ground. He peered through thick branches, saw Vedder reel, and swing about facing his assailant, who poured two more shots into his body ere it collapsed. Then the killer walked swiftly and, as he supposed, silently, away, keeping to the shadows cast by the trees.

His steps were perfectly audible to H'lo, who, swinging soundlessly from limb to limb, overtook him and followed him at a little distance, until he came to the hedge, over which he vaulted, to be lost to sight down the dark road.

Thus far H'lo followed; then he hurried back to see if he could do anything for his master. But in the meantime, he had got the Croaker's spoor; filed and indexed his peculiar scent in his mind. To H'lo all men smelled as differently as they looked. And all white men smelled badly! Even the Reverend Peter Vedder smelled sickishly of soap and sometimes of bay rum. He had noted the walk of the Croaker; here again, all men differed to H'lo. No two walked alike. He observed the color of his hair as shown under his cap; the eyes he could not tell about. But the slit mouth, with the half lift at one corner, and one ear with a mangled lobe, bitten in some ancient fight and improperly treated, so that it was thickened and scarred—these and other details H'lo would never forget.

Hurrying back, he found Vedder seemingly dead. He was unconscious, and he bled badly. When he saw this, H'lo knew that he was not dead. Dead men do not bleed. Ripping off his

coat and tearing aside the shirt, H'lo found all three of the bullet holes. He found Vedder's handkerchief, tore it up into wads, stuffed them into the wounds. This was highly unhygienic, but it served. After which, he picked his master up easily, though his master outweighed him two to one, slung him over a shoulder, and trotted up to the house. Shortly, a hysterical housekeeper was telephoning the police, who arrived with a surgeon. Vedder's own physician arrived shortly thereafter.

The police grilled H'lo. That is what police are for: to grill people. The results were satisfactory as far as they went. Going out to the scene of the shooting they found footprints, faintly visible. These came from a syringa bush and led back to the hedge, where broken twigs showed that somebody had crossed. It was H'lo who pointed out the faint tracks whenever the police with their flashlights failed. The assailant had unfortunately not dropped any of those clues that are always dropped in good fiction. There wasn't so much as a coat button, not even a shred of cloth torn off by a branch of the trees the Croaker had skirted.

It was clear to the police that H'lo was not guilty. His loyalty was attested by the servants. It wasn't believable that he had been in possession of an automatic with a silencer. And the sergeant in charge, and, later on, his superiors, knowing of necessity something of the conditions prevailing in Kemper, and of the cramp the Reverend Peter Vedder had put in the styles of certain worthies, set forth to look the underworld over. They might be tainted with graft; to some extent, a few of their higher officials might even have secret traffic with the bootlegging barons; but the cold-blooded murder of a famous citizen like Peter Vedder must be punished. It was with entire unanimity that the Kemper police acted. Their plain-clothes men swarmed out like bees from a hive. The hunt was on.

H'lo, handicapped though he was by having a vocabulary of a one-year-old child, might have supplied more details than he

chose to supply. He could have drawn so good a picture of the man who had stolen upon his master as he walked under the full moon that the police would have recognized him who was known in the underworld as the Croaker. They might or might not have been able to pin it on him; they certainly would have given him the works, a three- or four-day continuous session of the third degree. Anyway, they would have made the pinch.

But they got no details from H'lo. Why should he tell them? In all fairness, by all the rights of sportsmanship, the man belonged to him, to H'lo. Let the police find out for themselves. He, H'lo, would make his own play. In his own way he would see that the wheels of justice turned, even though they might not twirl in conventional style.

Meanwhile, Peter Vedder, still unconscious, lay as good as dead. His chest had been X-rayed. Two eminent surgeons had joined his physician and the police surgeon in conference. A trained nurse hovered about. In the hall outside, a policeman sat, waiting to take any dying statement that might be forthcoming. And, his grilling by the police at an end, H'lo was back in his garage chamber, kneeling down on the floor, where in a small earthen dish smoldered a strange collection of objects he had kept by him for just such emergencies.

There were the whiskers of a black tomcat, some parings of Vedder's finger nails, a sticky gum he had brought back from the Bornese jungle, on to which he had squeezed one or two drops of his own blood, from a pricked finger. The whole was mixed with sundry scraps of rag and paper, and smelled very badly, but was, or so H'lo believed, grateful to the nostrils of sundry bloody-minded spirits he was accustomed to invoke in hours of need.

And what greater need could there be, thought the little brown man as he swayed on his knees and muttered queer incantations, than to repay to the full the evil man who had crept upon his master unawares, and shot him first in the back and

then twice more in the chest? Later on, H'lo would pray for his recovery. But that demanded an entirely different procedure, directed to different spirits. The first thing to do, as he saw it, was to make sure that his master were avenged. Recovery, desirable as it was, much as he loved him, was secondary.

Beside him, as he knelt alone in the dark room, lay his kris, a heavy sword-knife whose beautifully polished steel glimmered where it caught the faint rays that filtered in through drawn shutters in his one window. Its blade was patterned in a wave, not dissimilar to the humbler bread cutter of our households. Thus, its cutting surface was tripled in effectiveness; and so razor-keen was it that H'lo could toss a straw into the air and sever it as it was drifting downward. And so lightning quick was its wielder that he could cut the straw twice before it fell. This weapon was indeed a part of his religion and was ordinarily kept in a lacquer scabbard bearing mystic symbols.

H'lo's time was his own. His services to his master were perfunctory. He received no actual wages, having little or no use for money; but in a leather bag he had quite a sum tucked away, and he could have had much more by simply asking for it.

He was not a familiar figure on the Kemper streets, although he often accompanied Peter Vedder when the latter drove his car. Inasmuch as Vedder had never learned to speak more than a few short phrases in any Bornese dialect, conversation between master and man was negligible. Their sole tie was a queer sort of affection largely based on misunderstanding. To Vedder, his little man was a converted heathen of slender mentality. To H'lo, Vedder was a noble gentleman of feeble intellect and a priest without power. They got along admirably.

From this hour H'lo began to appear more often on the streets of Kemper. He went out mostly after dark, and frequented the less savory quarters of the town. His knowledge bridged nothing of the local political condition, the organized

vice that prevailed in certain places. But his instinct told him where he would be most likely to encounter the man who had shot Vedder; and it was not very long before his patience was rewarded.

He met up with the Croaker lounging in front of a billiard parlor; and, keeping unobtrusively in the shadows, and biding his time with the patience of the savage hunter, he trailed him to Gory Hammond's place. Thereafter, he established the fact that this was the Croaker's regular hangout; and henceforth H'lo made this neighborhood his own ambush.

He found a dark doorway across the street, the doorway of one of the houses Peter Vedder had caused to be vacated; and here he watched night after night, since he could not deal with the Croaker while surrounded by cronies, most or all of whom were armed.

It was not that H'lo feared these, or hesitated to give his own life in order to take that of his enemy; but he feared failure. He had a deep respect for the weapons of the white man. Furthermore, in order to make his revenge complete, it was desirable that the Croaker should die, while H'lo went unscathed.

Meanwhile, in his upper chamber, Peter Vedder was getting better. A rugged constitution, coupled with a powerful will to live, formed just the partnership his skillful physicians needed. They ventured to issue a bulletin stating that the crisis had been passed, and that, barring a relapse or a complication, Vedder would, in time, be as good as new. But meanwhile, he could not be moved.

It was a matter of many nights of fruitless watching before H'lo got his chance. Nights when he blended with the dark shadows of the empty doorway, his kris thrust through his belt and extending down on the inside of his trouser leg, sheathed in its lacquered scabbard.

There came a night when a dark car drew up in the alley beside Gory's place; and toward midnight, the Croaker and two companions emerged and took their places within. The

powerful car moved noiselessly up the alley and on to the street. Its driver piloted, as he believed, three paying fares. Actually, he had an extra fare; for H'lo, slipping like a shadow from his ambush, leaped forward and curled up within the great spare tire lashed to the end of the car. Once there, he was as unobtrusive as a worm in a walnut.

The ride he took was long, fast, and uncomfortable. At first he could identify the streets, because his hunter's sense of any path once taken did not desert him. But presently they swung off into avenues not familiar to him; and in time they came to great stretches of vacant land, dotted here and there with the homes of Kemper's wealthiest citizens.

Just before reaching one of the largest and most imposing of these estates, the car turned aside into a service entrance, where beneath a high brick wall it was practically invisible. The chauffeur sat at his wheel. The three fares stepped out, one of them bearing a small, worn leather bag. Passing farther down the service entrance, and coming to a locked wooden gate, one of them set up a little folding ladder, up which all three climbed, to drop over the other side of the wall, drawing up their ladder behind them.

H'lo, having no ladder, was obliged to use other means. He climbed a tree, swung from it to another, from a limb of this onto the top of the wall. The top was garnished with broken glass; but H'lo wore shoes and was not scratched. Once over the wall, on the smooth lawn, he removed his shoes, leaving them at the foot of the wall. Ahead of him he could dimly see the three men making their way toward the outlines of the great house, closed in the absence of its owner, who was abroad. Only a caretaker remained within. The Croaker and his pals had come to loot the place.

Following slowly and noiselessly, his flat nostrils twitching as he quested for the familiar scent of the Croaker, H'lo noted presently that at a great clump of rhododendrons the three paused. There followed a whispered conference; and then,

leaving the Croaker behind with the leather bag, his two companions dropped to the ground and began to crawl toward the darkened mansion. It was their duty to explore, to learn if possible just where the caretaker was, and, if he had gone to bed, to select the right window to force. And then to return to inform their chief.

Had H'lo arranged matters himself he could not have improved on them. Everything was exactly to his liking. He was left alone with the man he wanted. Softly, he drew forth his kris, removing it from its scabbard. Flat on his belly, he began to crawl toward the clump of rhododendrons.

So utterly quiet was his advance, that the watchful Croaker had no inkling that any living being was near him. All his senses were focused ahead, his eyes and ears straining to follow the slow progress of his two pioneers. It was not, indeed, until H'lo reached out a skinny brown hand and touched him on the shoulder with the finger of fate that he uttered a startled oath and rolled over, his eyes staring backward and upward into the gloom.

Whether he knew even then what it was that stood over him, or why, will never be known. There followed a sharp grunt as H'lo whirled his living shaft of wavering steel, estimated to the minute fraction of an inch the precise cervical vertebræ he proposed to sever, and struck. The surprised head of the Croaker rolled to one side; his body for a moment threshed in the dew-heavy grass.

Without touching the body, and scarcely looking at it, H'lo raised the head by its sleek black hair. He held it outright until the blood had drained from it. Then he thrust it into a crude bag he had contrived from an old rubber raincoat, and with only a glance toward where the other two men were still creeping forward toward the house H'lo retraced his footsteps, put on his shoes, scaled the wall in the same way he had before, but a little more awkwardly, because of his burden. He arrived home before dawn and without being seen by anybody.

And as he was a trifle tired he fell instantly into a sound sleep.

It was some five minutes after H'lo had dropped over the wall that "Hotfoot" Bill Garry returned to report that all was well; that the snores of the faithful caretaker made music on the midnight air, and that the third man waited under a certain window for the Croaker to fetch the leather satchel with its tools.

Arrived at the rhododendron bush Hotfoot paused and made a slight hissing sound to warn the Croaker, who was a nervous man, likely to shoot first and investigate afterward. Somewhat to his surprise, the Croaker did not reply. Hotfoot hissed again, then crept forward. He could see the other's figure outstretched on the grass, motionless, apparently vigilant. Hotfoot whispered to him.

" 'Sall jake, Croaker! C'm'on."

The Croaker did not move. Surprised, Hotfoot next ventured to poke his chief with a foot; but though the body gave, no reassuring voice came to him in the dark. Then Hotfoot turned on his electric torch, and what he saw—or rather what he failed to see—drew from him a lamentable cry upon his Maker. He dropped the flashlight, and his knees buckled. Frantically, he searched for the light, assuring himself that he had been the victim of some trick of light and shade, or of an overstimulated imagination. Finding his torch, he again bathed the figure of the Croaker in its cold beam. And then he saw that he had not been mistaken.

The Croaker had no head! And no spare head lay anywhere about. It had gone! Vanished utterly. As clean as if removed at leisure by a coroner's physician, the Croaker's headpiece had been sliced from its supporting neck. Nor was there the slightest evidence of any struggle; no torn turf, trodden grass. Aside from his headless condition, the Croaker was resting as easily as if asleep in his bed.

Hotfoot collapsed to the ground, unable to speak aloud. He trembled as if in a fit of St. Vitus's dance. Only after a long,

long time were his clumsy fingers able to dig out a card of white powder from his vest pocket; and even then he lost most of the first dose. He tried again, snuffed up a tremendous jolt, and presently recovered enough nerve and strength to scramble to his feet and fly across the grass, making little effort this time to keep to the shadows. And so he presently rejoined his waiting companion, under the library window. Dropping to his knees, he placed his mouth to one of "Heeby-Jeeby's" ears.

"*Gawd,* Heeby! He's dead!"

"*Shut up!* Who's dead?" snarled the other, in a near whisper.

"The Croaker! Somebody's cut off his block. It ain't nowheres around, neither. I looked for it!"

Heeby-Jeeby turned and looked venomously into his terrified pal's staring eyes. He knew that Hotfoot was a hophead, although he had promised to take only one jolt to-night, and that an hour before they started. *If he had gummed up the works—*

His insistence and evident terror forced Heeby to follow him back, to see for himself. What he saw sent him nearly as limp as it had Hotfoot. Only, not being a hophead, his nerves were under better control. Not too good, however! But it was he who insisted upon making a more thorough search. Guardedly using their torch, they covered every inch of ground within many yards of the body; but without effect. Nor could they make out the slightest trace of footsteps other than their own. The bare feet of H'lo had left no marks on the dank grass.

Heeby was almost as unnerved as the other; but he did have sense enough to frisk the headless torso of their late leader, and to remove therefrom all the money, his rod, and one or two papers. Then both men, all appetite for their evening's exploit gone, hastened to the wall where they had parked the ladder, and rejoined the waiting chauffeur, whose hair rose as he listened to what had taken place back there. In two minutes more, the great car was speeding back to Kemper with its amazing news.

Not until past noon the next day did the caretaker come in for his own private shock. Upon discovering the headless intruder, he made only a very cursory examination before hurrying to the telephone. The police arrived in less than twenty minutes. The reporters were not much behind them. Never before had Kemper had such a magnificent front-page story!

The underworld reeks with superstition. Generally speaking, the less religion a man has, the more he believes in hunches and mascots, in evil spirits and jinxes. The news of the Croaker's horrible end flashed through the underworld long before the first newspaper extra was on the streets. And the identity of the slain man was not fully determined until next morning's edition appeared.

In any ordinary circumstance, the Croaker would have been given a swell funeral. The underworld delights in such; in the displaying of huge and tasteless and very expensive floral wreaths and emblems, a band, all the taxicabs in town and, if possible, stores closed, schools dismissed, and flags at half mast. In the case of a man as useful and as prominent as the Croaker, the body would lie in state for a day at least. But it was awkward to be saddled with a body lacking any head! And so, the lying in state was omitted. Also, a sort of chill seizing the underworld in its grip, the floral gifts were rather meager, the attendance decidedly light. The Croaker's funeral was the drabbest Kemper had seen in years, save when an inmate of the Town Farm died.

The police made diligent search for the missing head. They didn't especially care because the Croaker had been beheaded, but they did dislike to have anybody make away with the remains, or any part thereof. It was necessary to accuse somebody, make an arrest, and have another grilling of the suspect. And without the head, and in the absence of any witness who would admit knowing anything about the movements of the Croaker on the fatal night, there could be no suspect.

In many furtive backrooms and cellars, whispered specula-

tion went on as to who had bisected their famous gunman and what had happened to his head. Many a bold killer refused to emerge alone after nightfall. There was a marked decrease in stick-ups and banditry of all sorts. Even the police preferred to patrol the night routes in pairs! And no boy in all Kemper could have been hired to pass the cemetery after dark, wherein reposed the Croaker; or all of him that had been found.

Unaware and uninterested in the tremors that throbbed in the less savory parts of the town, H'lo worked happily in his room over the old stable. He had all the time there was, and nobody ever visited him. And how good it seemed to him, an ex-head-hunter of parts, to be engaged once more at his artistic tasks!

The proper curing of the severed head of an enemy need not be described for two good reasons. The details are not, by Caucasian standards, pleasant ones; and everything except the more secret parts of the complicated process may be learned from books of travel in any public library. H'lo had first of all to remove the brains of the Croaker; not too difficult, this, because there were so few of them. He had to gather the proper roots and barks to tan the flesh with. Some of these he had brought from Borneo, others he gathered from the trees of Beulah Land. It is a long process, and was made longer because of the little man's desire to make of this his masterpiece. No telling when he'd have another head to operate on!

When the cruder portions of his labors had been accomplished thoroughly, the workman gave place to the artist. For it is in recreating from the tanned, leathery features the precise look of the original, as he was in life, that the true head-hunter excels. And H'lo was a true artist. He overlooked nothing. The black hair he slicked back with oil. He gave to the lips that sinister lift at one corner, characteristic of the Croaker. The lines in his face were correctly incised.

His hardest task concerned itself with the eyes. But here, luck helped him out. Happening to glance within the windows

of an optician, on one of the rare days when he walked on Main Street, he beheld a tray of artificial eyes, beautifully and realistically made. They were of all colors and assorted sizes. One set were nearly the duplicate of the sullen "lamps" of the late Croaker. H'lo went within, and largely by making signs, bargained for them.

The price surprised him but did not deter him. And to the young clerk, a newcomer who knew not who H'lo was, the incident of selling a pair of artificial eyes to a "funny little darkey" who had perfectly good ones of his own, was all in the day's work and swelled his sales' commission.

There arrived a day when H'lo was permitted to make his first visit to the sick-room, and to feast his eyes on his beloved master. He bore with him a gift, incased in a pillow case. And when, after sinking to one knee beside the bed, and kissing his master's hand, he rose and snatched off the pillow case, there was revealed the miraculously lifelike head of the Croaker!

An ordinary invalid would have received a severe shock; but the Reverend Peter Vedder was not an ordinary man. Most of his life had been spent among primitive peoples, and he had become hardened to strange and even revolting customs. Thus, he suspected that his faithful H'lo had been, ere becoming Christianized, a head-hunter. And he himself had brought home, among a truckload of souvenirs of all climes, two or three dried heads he had purchased in bazaars. But not one of them could compare with the one H'lo had brought him to-day!

He didn't relish the gift; but to him it was clear that H'lo had given him what must have been his very choicest possession. It was probable that the little brown man had taken this head himself; Vedder did not care to inquire into that. He was anxious to show that he appreciated the spirit that actuated him; and he managed a faint smile as he patted H'lo's brow and thanked him.

H'lo himself did not doubt that his master understood that he was gazing upon the head of his would-be assassin. And never before had he admired him more! He was dignified, and restrained; did not gloat, neither did he shudder. His poise, the murmured thanks, and the pat on the head indicated to H'lo that his gift was understood and appreciated. He retired with joy singing in his heart.

Some weeks elapsed before Vedder could be taken outdoors for a walk of a few steps. Other weeks passed before he was able to drive his own car as formerly. To celebrate the occasion, he put into execution a design he had long formed. He was dissatisfied with the gift of H'lo. To be sure, he had other heads in his trophy room, but these did not seem like anything that ever had been human; they were impersonal as well as moth-eaten. But the head H'lo had given him was different. It always seemed to be sneering at him; and there was a sinister gleam in its too lifelike eyes that followed him wherever he went. Even when he had locked it up in a closet, he couldn't help thinking about it, smirking away alone in the dark!

Kemper had a very good, though incomplete, Museum of Fine Arts. There were some excellent paintings and sculpture, antiques of all sorts, tapestries, pottery and bronzes, and an Anthropological Department with a miscellaneous assortment of stuff, mostly donated by traveling citizens. To this museum the Reverend Vedder determined to present his best and most gruesome head. And the day he first drove his own car he placed the head, carefully packed in an old hat box, in H'lo's hands.

To H'lo a museum meant nothing whatever. The important looking building before which Vedder stopped his car, with its white marble front and rank of austere Doric columns, was in H'lo's belief, a temple of one of the white men's gods. It could be nothing else.

Within, Vedder was granted an interview with the head

curator, and to him he presented his strange gift. The curator called in the head of the department of anthropology and his assistant; and all three rhapsodized over the splendid addition to their collection. When all had admired it to their fill, silently observed by the small gentleman from Borneo, they filed out into the hall and wended their way through many passages, and the Egyptian Room, the Chamber of Coins and Medals, the Chinese Room and finally into an imposing chamber in which H'lo instantly recognized two or three ugly little stone gods, deities of his own country! And there were spears, and blowpipes, and a few good examples of the kris. But until now no embalmed head had adorned the place. This, thought H'lo, his beady eyes missing nothing, was that holy inner chamber of the temple, devoted to his own gods. And it delighted him to believe that his master himself reverenced these! If not, why was such a splendid room provided for them?

With due ceremony the head of the late Croaker was placed in a conspicuous position, displacing a former basket. And then the party broke up, and Vedder drove home. Neither he nor H'lo uttered any comment on the memorable ceremony of this morning.

In its next bulletin, the Museum of Fine Arts mentioned Vedder's gift. But the circulation of these bulletins was limited. There were a great many citizens of Kemper who not only never read them, but who did not even know they were printed; who, indeed, never set foot within their museum. It was chance that brought to the attention of the underworld the latest addition to the civic collection.

Rumors gleaned from newspaper columns had informed the group, of which the Croaker had once been a shining light, that the museum sheltered some priceless antiques of a portable nature. Sundry jade rings and figurines, a certain ancient tapestry presented by the widow of a manufacturer of speedometers, some Phœnician glasses, were mentioned. Loot that

would go easily into a handbag, or even an overcoat pocket. And the weather was getting cool enough for overcoats, now. Presently, one "Three-finger" Peters was instructed to visit the museum, which was free to the public every weekday from ten until four. He was to get the lay of the land, and to spot the most portable and accessible valuables, observe the number and the disposition of the attendants, and so forth.

It was while making this preliminary inspection that Three-finger was stricken to come face to face with the missing head of the man he had known well in life! He barely restrained himself from crying aloud in his surprise and terror as he looked into the mocking eyes; and it seemed as if the snarling lips must have whispered to him something his ears had just failed to catch.

Without pursuing his investigations, he fled back to Gory Hammond's, there to tell his incredible tale. He was jeered at, insulted; but he stuck to his story. Finally, two others went to see for themselves. They too returned badly shaken, tremulous, and needing, the one a drink, the other a shot in the arm.

The news spread. All the men, and many of the women who had known the Croaker, took a long or short look, according to their nerves. There could be no doubt whatever; the same lift of the mouth, the same look in the eyes, the scarred lobe of one ear; to be sure, the head was much darker than the Croaker had been, and looked as if it had been varnished. Probably it had been, to preserve it! The underworld shuddered. But because it is secretive, and hates to ask questions, let alone answer them, it was a long time before any one of them ventured to make the slightest inquiry.

One day Gory Hammond, a man far more intelligent than most of the others, but almost equally disturbed by the mystery, spoke to the attendant who was in charge of this room and the Chinese one.

"What's that?" he asked abruptly.

The attendant, a doddering old man, shuffled forward.

"That? It's a head. *Yeah,* a real one."

"Where'd ya get it?" pursued Mr. Hammond, determined to make an end of the mystery that was upsetting the morale of his followers.

"Eh? Oh, the Reverend Vedder, he give it to the museum. He's got a fine collection of heads to his home. Lived in strange parts, the missionary has, and learned strange doings."

Hammond blinked, swallowed hard, and remarked: *"I'll say he has!"*

His report, if it solved the mystery, did not stop the talk. It seemed incredible, yet it must be true! That a missionary, a man of God, and active in all righteous causes, should coldly steal upon his enemy, behead him, and then embalm the head and present it to the museum, to be publicly displayed as a trophy of his bloody revenge! And the attendant had admitted that this was not the only head: there were more! A "fine collection" of them; those were the very words. No telling how many would-be killers of the good clergyman had been tracked down by him, beheaded, and desecrated! A good man to let alone, for all his pious pretenses, was the Reverend Peter Vedder.

In the midst of the underworld arguments, another bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts appeared. It stated, among other things:

> An encouraging fact has been the increased attendance during the past month. Our turnstile has registered more than two hundred above the average at this time of year. The officials and attendants state that the principal increase has been among what might be termed those in the humbler walks of life. Also, that their interests have seemed to be largely drawn by the more serious exhibits. Kemper may congratulate itself that at last the common people are beginning to take more advantage of our splendid municipal opportunities.

EUDORA WELTY

A Worn Path

It was December—a bright frozen day in the early morning. Far out in the country there was an old Negro woman with her head tied in a red rag, coming along a path through the pine woods. Her name was Phoenix Jackson. She was very old, and small, and she walked slowly in the dark pine shadows, moving a little from side to side in her steps, with the balanced heaviness and lightness of a pendulum in a grandfather clock. She carried a thin small cane made from an umbrella, and with this she kept tapping the frozen earth in front of her. This made a grave and persistent noise in the still air that seemed meditative, like the chirping of a solitary little bird.

She wore a dark striped dress reaching down to her shoe tops and an equally long apron of bleached sugar sacks, with a full pocket: all neat and tidy, but every time she took a step she might have fallen over her shoelaces, which dragged from her unlaced shoes. She looked straight ahead. Her eyes were blue with age. Her skin had a pattern all its own of numberless branching wrinkles, and as though a whole little tree stood in the middle of her forehead, but a golden color ran underneath, and the two knobs of her cheeks were illumined by a yellow

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burning under the dark. Under the red rag her hair came down on her neck in the frailest of ringlets, still black, and with an odor like copper.

Now and then there was a quivering in the thicket. Old Phoenix said, "Out of my way, all you foxes, owls, beetles, jack rabbits, coons, and wild animals! . . . Keep out from under these feet, little bobwhites. . . . Keep the big wild hogs out of my path. Don't let none of those come running my direction. I got a long way." Under her small black-freckled hand her cane, limber as a buggy whip, would switch at the brush as if to rouse up any hiding things.

On she went. The woods were deep and still. The sun made the pine needles almost too bright to look at, up where the wind rocked. The cones dropped as light as feathers. Down in the hollow was the mourning dove—it was not too late for him.

The path ran up a hill. "Seem like there is chains about my feet, time I get this far," she said, in the voice of argument old people keep to use with themselves. "Something always take a hold on this hill—pleads I should stay."

After she got to the top she turned and gave a full, severe look behind her where she had come. "Up through pines," she said at length. "Now down through oaks."

Her eyes opened their widest and she started down gently. But before she got to the bottom of the hill a bush caught her dress.

Her fingers were busy and intent, but her skirts were full and long, so that before she could pull them free in one place they were caught in another. It was not possible to allow the dress to tear. "I in the thorny bush," she said. "Thorns, you doing your appointed work. Never want to let folks pass—no sir. Old eyes thought you was a pretty little *green* bush."

Finally, trembling all over, she stood free, and after a moment dared to stoop for her cane.

"Sun so high!" she cried, leaning back and looking, while

the thick tears went over her eyes. "The time getting all gone here."

At the foot of this hill was a place where a log was laid across the creek.

"Now comes the trial," said Phoenix. Putting her right foot out, she mounted the log and shut her eyes. Lifting her skirt, leveling her cane fiercely before her like a festival figure in some parade, she began to march across. Then she opened her eyes, and she was safe on the other side.

"I wasn't as old as I thought," she said.

But she sat down to rest. She spread her skirts on the bank around her and folded her hands over her knees. Up above her was a tree in a pearly cloud of mistletoe. She did not dare to close her eyes, and when a little boy brought her a plate with a slice of marble cake on it she spoke to him. "That would be acceptable," she said. But when she went to take it there was just her own hand in the air.

So she left that tree, and had to go through a barbed-wire fence. There she had to creep and crawl, spreading her knees and stretching her fingers like a baby trying to climb the steps. But she talked loudly to herself: she could not let her dress be torn now, so late in the day, and she could not pay for having her arm or her leg sawed off if she got caught fast where she was.

At last she was safe through the fence and risen up out in the clearing. Big dead trees, like black men with one arm, were standing in the purple stalks of the withered cotton field. There sat a buzzard.

"Who you watching?"

In the furrow she made her way along.

"Glad this not the season for bulls," she said, looking sideways, "and the good Lord made his snakes to curl up and sleep in the winter. A pleasure I don't see no two-headed snake coming around that tree, where it come once. It took a while to get by him, back in the summer."

She passed through the old cotton and went into a field of dead corn. It whispered and shook, and was taller than her head. "Through the maze now," she said, for there was no path.

Then there was something tall, black, and skinny there, moving before her.

At first she took it for a man. It could have been a man dancing in the field. But she stood still and listened, and it did not make a sound. It was as silent as a ghost.

"Ghost," she said sharply, "who be you the ghost of? For I have heard of nary death close by."

But there was no answer, only the ragged dancing in the wind.

She shut her eyes, reached out her hand, and touched a sleeve. She found a coat and inside that an emptiness, cold as ice.

"You scarecrow," she said. Her face lighted. "I ought to be shut up for good," she said with laughter. "My senses is gone. I too old. I the oldest people I ever know. Dance, old scarecrow," she said, "while I dancing with you."

She kicked her foot over the furrow, and with mouth drawn down shook her head once or twice in a little strutting way. Some husks blew down and whirled in streamers about her skirts.

Then she went on, parting her way from side to side with the cane, through the whispering field. At last she came to the end, to a wagon track, where the silver grass blew between the red ruts. The quail were walking around like pullets, seeming all dainty and unseen.

"Walk pretty," she said. "This the easy place. This the easy going." She followed the track, swaying through the quiet bare fields, through the little strings of trees silver in their dead leaves, past cabins silver from weather, with the doors and windows boarded shut, all like old women under a spell sitting there. "I walking in their sleep," she said, nodding her head vigorously.

In a ravine she went where a spring was, silently flowing through a hollowed log. Old Phoenix bent and drank. "Sweet gum makes the water sweet," she said, and drank more. "Nobody know who made this well, for it was here when I was born."

The track crossed a swampy part where the moss hung as white as lace from every limb. "Sleep on, alligators, and blow your bubbles." Then the cypress trees went into the road. Deep, deep it went down between the high, green-colored banks. Overhead the live oaks met, and it was as dark as a cave.

A big black dog with a lolling tongue came up out of the weeds by the ditch. She was meditating, and not ready, and when he came at her she only hit him a little with her cane. Over she went in the ditch, like a little puff of milkweed.

Down there her senses drifted away. A dream visited her, and she reached her hand up, but nothing reached down and gave her a pull. So she lay there and presently went to talking. "Old woman," she said to herself, "that black dog came up out of the weeds to stall you off, and now there he sitting on his fine tail, smiling at you."

A white man finally came along and found her—a hunter, a young man, with his dog on a chain.

"Well, Granny!" he laughed. "What are you doing there?"

"Lying on my back like a June bug waiting to be turned over, mister," she said, reaching up her hand.

He lifted her up, gave her a swing in the air, and set her down. "Anything broken, Granny?"

"No sir, them old dead weeds is springy enough," said Phoenix, when she had got her breath. "I thank you for your trouble."

"Where do you live, Granny?" he asked, while the two dogs were growling at each other.

"Away back younder, sir, behind the ridge. You can't even see it from here."

"On your way home?"

"No, sir, I going to town."

"Why, that's too far! That's as far as I walk when I come out myself, and I get something for my trouble." He patted the stuffed bag he carried, and there hung down a little closed claw. It was one of the bobwhites, with its beak hooked bitterly to show it was dead. "Now you go on home, Granny!"

"I bound to go to town, mister," said Phoenix. "The time come around."

He gave another laugh, filling the whole landscape. "I know you old colored people! Wouldn't miss going to town to see Santa Claus!"

But something held Old Phoenix very still. The deep lines in her face went into a fierce and different radiation. Without warning she had seen with her own eyes a flashing nickel fall out of the man's pocket on to the ground.

"How old are you, Granny?" he was saying.

"There is no telling, mister," she said, "no telling."

Then she gave a little cry and clapped her hands, and said, "Git on away from here, dog! Look! Look at that dog!" She laughed as if in admiration. "He ain't scared of nobody. He a big black dog." She whispered, "Sick him!"

"Watch me get rid of that cur," said the man. "Sick him, Pete! Sick him!"

Phoenix heard the dogs fighting and heard the man running and throwing sticks. She even heard a gunshot. But she was slowly bending forward by that time, further and further forward, the lids stretched down over her eyes, as if she were doing this in her sleep. Her chin was lowered almost to her knees. The yellow palm of her hand came out from the fold of her apron. Her fingers slid down and along the ground under the piece of money with the grace and care they would have in lifting an egg from under a setting hen. Then she slowly straightened up; she stood erect, and the nickel was in her apron pocket. A bird flew by. Her lips moved. "God watching me the whole time. I come to stealing."

The man came back, and his own dog panted about them. "Well, I scared him off that time," he said, and then he laughed and lifted his gun and pointed it at Phoenix.

She stood straight and faced him.

"Doesn't the gun scare you?" he said, still pointing it.

"No sir, I seen plenty go off closer by, in my day, and for less than what I done," she said, holding utterly still.

He smiled and shouldered the gun. "Well, Granny," he said, "you must be a hundred years old, and scared of nothing. I'd give you a dime if I had any money with me. But you take my advice and stay home, and nothing will happen to you."

"I bound to go on my way, mister," said Phoenix. She inclined her head in the red rag. Then they went in different directions, but she could hear the gun shooting again and again over the hill.

She walked on. The shadows hung from the oak trees to the road like curtains. Then she smelled wood smoke, and smelled the river, and she saw a steeple and the cabins on their steep steps. Dozens of little black children whirled around her. There ahead was Natchez shining. Bells were ringing. She walked on.

In the paved city it was Christmas time. There were red and green electric lights strung and crisscrossed everywhere, and all turned on in the daytime. Old Phoenix would have been lost if she had not distrusted her eyesight and depended on her feet to know where to take her.

She paused quietly on the sidewalk, where people were passing by. A lady came along in the crowd, carrying an armful of red-, green-, and silver-wrapped presents; she gave off perfume like the red roses in hot summer, and Phoenix stopped her.

"Please, missy, will you lace up my shoe?" She held up her foot.

"What do you want, Grandma?"

"See my shoe," said Phoenix. "Do all right for out in the

country, but wouldn't look right to go in a big building."

"Stand still then, Grandma," said the lady. She put her packages down carefully on the sidewalk beside her and laced and tied both shoes tightly.

"Can't lace 'em with a cane," said Phoenix. "Thank you, missy. I doesn't mind asking a nice lady to tie up my shoe when I gets out on the street."

Moving slowly and from side to side, she went into the stone building and into a tower of steps, where she walked up and around and around until her feet knew to stop.

She entered a door, and there she saw nailed up on the wall the document that had been stamped with the gold seal and framed in the gold frame which matched the dream that was hung up in her head.

"Here I be," she said. There was a fixed and ceremonial stiffness over her body.

"A charity case, I suppose," said an attendant who sat at the desk before her.

But Phoenix only looked above her head. There was sweat on her face; the wrinkles shone like a bright net.

"Speak up, Grandma," the woman said. "What's your name? We must have your history, you know. Have you been here before? What seems to be the trouble with you?"

Old Phoenix only gave a twitch to her face as if a fly were bothering her.

"Are you deaf?" cried the attendant.

But then the nurse came in.

"Oh, that's just old Aunt Phoenix," she said. "She doesn't come for herself; she has a little grandson. She makes these trips just as regular as clockwork—she lives away back off the Old Natchez Trace." She bent down. "Well, Aunt Phoenix, why don't you just take a seat? We won't keep you standing after your long trip." She pointed.

The old woman sat down, bolt upright in the chair.

"Now, how is the boy?" asked the nurse.

Old Phoenix did not speak.

"I said, how is the boy?"

But Phoenix only waited and stared straight ahead, her face very solemn and withdrawn into rigidity.

"Is his throat any better?" asked the nurse. "Aunt Phoenix, don't you hear me? Is your grandson's throat any better since the last time you came for the medicine?"

With her hands on her knees, the old woman waited, silent, erect, and motionless, just as if she were in armor.

"You mustn't take up our time this way, Aunt Phoenix," the nurse said. "Tell us quickly about your grandson, and get it over. He isn't dead, is he?"

At last there came a flicker and then a flame of comprehension across her face, and she spoke.

"My grandson. It was my memory had left me. There I sat and forgot why I made my long trip."

"Forgot?" The nurse frowned. "After you came so far?"

Then Phoenix was like an old woman begging a dignified forgiveness for waking up frightened in the night. "I never did go to school— I was too old at the Surrender," she said in a soft voice. "I'm an old woman without an education. It was my memory fail me. My little grandson, he is just the same, and I forgot it in the coming."

"Throat never heals, does it?" said the nurse, speaking in a loud, sure voice to Old Phoenix. By now she had a card with something written on it, a little list. "Yes. Swallowed lye. When was it—January—two—three years ago—"

Phoenix spoke unasked now. "No, missy, he not dead, he just the same. Every little while his throat begin to close up again, and he not able to swallow. He not get his breath. He not able to help himself. So the time come around, and I go on another trip for the soothing-medicine."

"All right. The doctor said as long as you came to get it you could have it," said the nurse. "But it's an obstinate case."

"My little grandson, he sit up there in the house all wrapped

up, waiting by himself," Phoenix went on. "We is the only two left in the world. He suffer and it don't seem to put him back at all. He got a sweet look. He going to last. He wear a little patch quilt and peep out, holding his mouth open like a little bird. I remembers so plain now. I not going to forget him again, no, the whole enduring time. I could tell him from all the others in creation."

"All right." The nurse was trying to hush her now. She brought her a bottle of medicine. "Charity," she said, making a check mark in a book.

Old Phoenix held the bottle close to her eyes and then carefully put it into her pocket.

"I thank you," she said.

"It's Christmas time, Grandma," said the attendant. "Could I give you a few pennies out of my purse?"

"Five pennies is a nickel," said Phoenix stiffly.

"Here's a nickel," said the attendant.

Phoenix rose carefully and held out her hand. She received the nickel and then fished the other nickel out of her pocket and laid it beside the new one. She stared at her palm closely, with her head on one side.

Then she gave a tap with her cane on the floor. "This is what come to me to do," she said. "I going to the store and buy my child a little windmill they sells, made out of paper. He going to find it hard to believe there such a thing in the world. I'll march myself back where he waiting, holding it straight up in this hand."

She lifted her free hand, gave a little nod, turned around, and walked out of the doctor's office. Then her slow step began on the stairs, going down.

Biographical Notes

SHERWOOD ANDERSON (1876–1941) was the third child of a large and unconventional family. In his ancestry Irish, Scottish, and Italian bloods were mingled. Ending his regular schooling at fourteen, he became a wandering laborer, a race-track follower, a soldier in the Spanish war in Cuba, and a tramp or "hobo." Soon, however, his associations became more literary. He was a member of the "Chicago group" of writers, afterwards lived with William Faulkner in New Orleans, and still later became a close friend of H. L. Mencken and of Theodore Dreiser. In short, he played a part in the literary revolution of the time. His reputation as a writer was established by the publication in 1919 of *Winesburg, Ohio,* constructed of panels of short narrative all dealing with people and events in Winesburg. Critics recognized that his point of view and his narrative methods were original. He has been called "the liberator of the short story."

WARREN BECK is a professor of English at Lawrence College, Appleton, Wisconsin, and has taught also at Shrivenham American University in England (the army college), and at the Bread Loaf School of English in Vermont. He has published two novels, two volumes of short stories, and many critical essays on modern authors. His novels, *Final Score* and *Pause Under the Sky,* have won success both in England and in America. His short stories have appeared in *Story* with notable regularity and in the short story annuals. They have been

collected in *The Blue Sash and Other Stories* and *The First Fish and Other Stories.*

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT (1898–1943) was the son of an army family of Scotch-Irish, Spanish-Minorcan descent. As a child and as a young man he came to know East, West, North, and South, living with the family in one army post after another. He was graduated at Yale in 1919, having won several prizes for literary work as an undergraduate. In 1920, he received his M.A. degree at Yale. After giving promise of literary achievement, he was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship which enabled him to complete his epical poem, *John Brown's Body,* in 1926. This became the foundation of his fame. It received the Pulitzer award in 1928. Many other honors followed as the distinction of his writing continued to be recognized. During World War II he devoted much of his time to patriotic literary work, including radio scripts and beautifully written prayers for the weal of the nation. He was "a poet who never cared much about an ivory tower."

STELLA BENSON (1892–1933) was born in Shropshire, England. Mary Cholmondeley, the author of *Red Pottage,* was her aunt. In her early twenties Miss Benson became interested in woman suffrage, and later, in World War I, kept a shop in the East End section of London and worked in the Land Army. She married O'Gorman Anderson in 1921 and thereafter made her home in China, where her husband was in the Customs Service. Her writings, though not voluminous, include novels, short stories, books of travel, biographies.

KAY BOYLE was born in 1903 at St. Paul, Minnesota. As a child she began showing versatile artistic interest in music,

painting, and writing. Subsequently she studied architecture and music. After an early marriage she went to live in France and has lived abroad most of the time since then. She has written both novels and short stories, generally as a citizen of the world without strong national or racial bias. The excellence of her work is attested by the habitual selection of her stories for reprinting in the annual anthologies.

HEYWOOD BROUN (1888–1939) was born in Brooklyn, educated at the Horace Mann School and at Harvard University. Most of his life thereafter was devoted to newspaper work and to work for causes which Broun regarded as liberal. He served variously on the staffs of the New York *Morning Telegraph*, the *Tribune*, the *World*, and the *World Telegram*. He wrote for the *Nation* and the *New Republic*. He ran for Congress on the Socialist ticket in 1930.

KATHARINE BRUSH was born in Middletown, Connecticut in 1902, spent her childhood in Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Maryland, and Newbury, Massachusetts, received her education at the Centenary Collegiate Institute, Hackettstown, New Jersey, and then became a member of the staff of the *Boston Traveler*. She wrote chiefly criticisms of motion pictures and plays while working for the newspaper. In 1923 she began writing fiction and has had great success as a novelist and writer of short stories, contributing to the *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping*, *The American*, and so forth.

ANTON CHEKHOV (1860–1904) was a Russian of humble birth who managed to secure a medical degree at the University of Moscow in 1884. Although he did not practice medicine he always regarded his medical training as invaluable to him

as a writer, in making him acquainted with life and people as they really are. Having gained almost immediate fame with his short stories, Chekhov turned to the drama and wrote several notable plays which added to his fame. Of these *The Cherry Orchard* is probably the best known.

ALFRED EDGAR COPPARD was born in 1878 at Folkestone, England, a fashionable summer-resort on the east coast near Dover. His early life was not such as is usually thought to be conducive to literary achievement. His father was a tailor; his mother was a housemaid; his schooling was meager, ending when he was nine years old. He was apprenticed to a tailor in London, but eventually became a clerk and accountant and worked here and there in England for a number of years. While working in Oxford he became friendly with a number of undergraduates, considerably younger than he, who were interested in writing, and himself began composing poems and stories. By constant reading and study he compensated for the early deficiencies in his education. Within a few years he had begun to publish. Among his better known works are: *Hips and Haws* (1922), poetry, *Adam and Eve and Pinch Me* (1921), stories, *The Black Dog and Other Stories* (1923).

JAMES GOULD COZZENS is a New Englander by tradition, though born in Chicago in 1903. He was educated at the Kent School in Connecticut and at Harvard. After two years at Harvard, however, he left college in order to write. In 1925 he was in Cuba, teaching; in 1926 he was in Europe; for a short time, in 1938, he was associate editor of *Fortune*. During the late war, he was a major in the Air Force. Now, he devotes himself to his farm in New Jersey and to his writing. Perhaps his best known novel is *The Last Adam*, 1933.

LORD DUNSANY, 18th Baron, (Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett) was born in 1878. He was educated at Eton, took part in the South African and European wars and was wounded in action. His regiments were the Inniskilling Fuseliers and the Coldstream Guards. In 1940–41 he was Byron Professor of English Literature at Athens University, from which he received an honorary degree. His published works are numerous, including poems, stories, and plays.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD (1896–1940) was born in Minnesota. As a boy he read adventure stories and avoided schoolwork. Already his ambition was to write. He entered Princeton in 1913 and during his undergraduate years wrote poems, stories, and musical comedies for the college magazines and the Triangle Club. He left college to enter the army, but continued to write. His first considerable success came with the publication of a novel, *This Side of Paradise*, in 1920. Other novels and short stories followed, many of them dealing with the "Jazz Age" or the "Lost Generation."

ANATOLE FRANCE (Jacques Anatole Thibault) (1844–1924) was the son of a bookseller of Paris, was educated in Paris, and was associated with Paris during his whole life. While still young he began making scholarly and literary contributions to periodicals. Then after serving in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, he became editor of a bibliographical publication and wrote regular critical essays for the periodicals. His novels and short stories, however, rather than his scholarly work, gradually established him in a secure position as a leader in French letters. He was elected to the French Academy, and in 1921 he won the Nobel Prize. His best known works are the novels: *The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard, Thais, Penguin Island.*

RING LARDNER (Ringgold Wilmer Lardner) (1885–1933), "philologist among the low-brows," was born in Michigan. He was educated at the local high school and at the Armour Institute of Technology in Chicago, expecting to become an engineer, but instead he became a newspaper reporter. He worked in various cities as a sportswriter until his writing became so popular that it was syndicated. Soon his work began to attract the attention of literary folk and he published several successful volumes of stories and verse. He also collaborated with George S. Kaufman in a play, *June Moon.*

ALBERT MALTZ was born in 1908 in Brooklyn. He was educated in the local schools and then went to Columbia University. Becoming interested in writing, he enrolled at Yale University in the famous dramatic workshop conducted there by George Pierce Baker and succeeded afterwards in getting several plays produced. But his greatest literary success has been in the short story. He has a great gift for portraying the lives of desperate, impoverished men and women, brought to ruin by the callousness and negligence of industry. His stories have deservedly won places in the O. Henry Memorial anthologies.

KATHERINE MANSFIELD (Kathleen Beauchamp) (1888–1923) was a New Zealander by birth, the daughter of a banker. Anxious to see the world, she persuaded her family to allow her to go to London. There she studied for three years at Queen's College and eventually settled in London, on a small allowance from her father, to devote herself to music and to writing. Her stories almost immediately attracted attention because of the subtle way in which their rather trivial material is charged with feeling. She married J. Middleton Murry, the English editor and critic, in 1913. Because of her health, she lived in France and Switzerland during her last years, some-

what depressed in spirit, and died at Fontainbleau at the age of 35.

WILLIAM MARCH (William Edward March Campbell) was born in 1893, in Alabama, and spent his boyhood in the South. He attended Valparaiso University and later studied law in Alabama. When the war came he enlisted in the Marine Corps and saw severe fighting, being wounded and gassed. He was decorated with the *Croix de Guerre* and the Distinguished Service Cross. Following the war he worked for a steamship corporation and became an official in the firm. His short stories have appeared frequently in the O'Brien and O. Henry anthologies and have been collected into several volumes: *Company K, The Little Wife and Other Stories, Some Like Them Short.*

ELICK MOLL was born in 1903 in New York City, but spent his boyhood in Chicago where he was educated in the local schools and the University of Chicago. He returned to New York and devoted himself to writing and to music, with brief experience in business. More recently he has moved to Hollywood where he now resides. His stories are proletarian.

SAKI (Hector H. Munro) (1870–1916) was born in Burma where his father was stationed as an army officer. He was educated in England, and after some time spent in Europe, studying privately, went back to Burma, where he held an appointment with the Military Police for about a year. Subsequently he returned to London and began writing for English journals and periodicals. He was a correspondent for *The Morning Post,* a Tory paper, in the Balkans, Poland, Russia, and Paris. Eventually he settled in London. When World War I began he enlisted and was killed in November 1916.

DOROTHY PARKER was born in New Jersey in 1893. After going to private schools in New Jersey and a convent school in New York, she worked for a while on the staff of *Vogue* and as dramatic critic for *Vanity Fair*, but soon turned to free-lance writing. She became famous for her witty, sardonic verse and her amusing, worldly-wise stories. She won the O. Henry Memorial Prize for her short story, *Big Blonde*, in 1929.

WILLIAM SAROYAN was born in California in 1908. As a small boy he began earning money by doing odd jobs of all sorts and thus became acquainted with a wide variety of people. At the same time he was reading widely. He left high school before finishing the course. His first real success as a writer came with the publication of *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze* in 1934. Soon afterward he turned to the drama and succeeded so well that in 1940 he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his play, *The Time of Your Life*. He refused to accept the award. His writing is prolific; he claims that he writes a short story in from one to three hours and never revises.

VINCENT SHEEAN was born in 1899 in Illinois. He studied at the University of Chicago but left on the death of his mother, without taking a degree, and became a newspaper reporter. This led to his becoming European correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune* and for a number of years he saw and recorded current history with brilliancy and eloquence. He lived in Italy, Switzerland, Russia, Persia, China, Spain, France, wherever the excitement was greatest. In *Personal History*, an autobiography published in 1935, much of his experience is recorded. His literary reputation is based chiefly upon this book, but he has won distinction also as a novelist and writer of short stories.

WILBUR DANIEL STEELE was born in 1886 in North Carolina, of a scholarly family. Beginning his education in a German kindergarten, he continued it in Denver, Colorado, where his father taught in the university. He then studied art, first in Boston and afterwards in Paris, Florence, Venice, and New York. Instead of continuing the career of artist, however, he turned to writing, specializing in the short story. Since 1915 he has won the most important prizes for short story work and has been lauded by critics as the foremost of American writers in this field.

JOHN STEINBECK was born in California in 1902, of German and Irish ancestry. He attended high school and studied at Stanford University, though he did not complete his course there. Instead he became a wanderer, supporting himself by odd jobs in order to write. His first published stories were not financially successful, but with *Tortilla Flat*, our best American picaresque, he became an important literary figure. *Of Mice and Men*, in 1937, was a best-seller and when produced as a play had a successful run. With the publication of *Grapes of Wrath* in 1939, Steinbeck reached the top of his fame. His short stories are not numerous but a few of them are among the best of the present age.

RUTH SUCKOW was born in 1892 in Iowa and as a child became well-acquainted with "the folks" of her native state by living in many places, as her father, a Congregational minister, moved from one parish to another. She attended Grinnell College and later the School of Expression, in Boston, and the University of Denver. To support herself and have freedom to write in leisure time, she operated an apiary for a number of years. Her first success as a writer came through the encouragement of H. L. Mencken, editor of the *Smart Set* and the

American Mercury. Her best stories appear in the volume entitled *Iowa Interiors.*

JOHN D. SWAIN is a New Englander, descended from colonial ancestors. He was educated at Worcester Academy and at Yale. He sold his first story to the old *Youth's Companion* at the age of twelve and has written fiction, verse, and special articles ever since. He has won a good many prizes in competitions, including one for a short-short story that contained just 117 words but had a complete plot. His stories have appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post,* the *Atlantic Monthly, Esquire,* and other magazines, have been broadcast on the radio, and have been made into successful moving pictures. He taught creative writing at Boston University for several years. He has a colossal notebook in which he has entered carefully authenticated facts for use in stories, "covering about everything from Astrology to the Atomic Bomb."

JAMES THURBER was born in 1894 in Ohio and was educated in the local schools and in Ohio State University. The influence of one of the professors, Joseph Russell Taylor, confirmed his desire to be a writer. First, however, he had a brief experience as clerk in the United States Embassy in Paris. Then he became a journalist, working for various newspapers at home and abroad until he joined the staff of the *New Yorker* in 1925. Although no longer a member of the staff, he has continued to publish in the *New Yorker* both drawings and stories. They have an individualized style which marks them as distinctly as if identified by a trade mark. With Elliott Nugent he is the author of the successful play, *The Male Animal.*

JEROME WEIDMAN was born in New York in 1913. He studied at the College of the City of New York and at New York University. Afterwards he took a degree in law school and was admitted to the bar; but he has never practiced. Instead, he has written novels and stories, giving pitiless and coldly objective depictions of the least pleasant aspects of human nature, especially as urban life brings them to view. He served on the editorial staff of Simon and Schuster from 1939 to 1942. His short stories are collected under the title: *The Horse That Could Whistle Dixie.*

EUDORA WELTY was born in Mississippi in 1909, was educated at the Mississippi State College for Women, the University of Wisconsin (B.A. 1929), and at Columbia University. She has written advertising, radio scripts, special articles and society news, in addition to her more ambitious stories. She achieved fame as a photographer of Negroes and in 1936 gave a one-man show of her work at the Lugene Gallery in New York. As a result of this photographic work she began writing stories about Negroes. Several of the early stories appeared in the *Southern Review,* later ones in the *Atlantic* and *Harper's Bazaar.* Her first collected edition was *Curtain of Green* in 1941, with an introduction by Katherine Anne Porter. A later collection is *The Wide Net* (1943). In 1942 Miss Welty was a Guggenheim Fellow.

LEANE ZUGSMITH was born in Kentucky in 1903. Her family moved northward, and after she completed high school at Atlantic City she studied at Goucher College, University of Pennsylvania, and Columbia University. She then worked as copy-editor for magazines publishing Westerns and detective stories and subsequently did publicity work for publishing

houses. Her sympathies are with the working class and she writes to quicken the social consciousness of her readers. She has written several novels. *Home is Where you Hang Your Childhood* is a collection of her short stories published in 1937.

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